



**Submission to the
Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Human Rights for Northern Ireland
from Core Issues Trust
(Charity Number 105095).**

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CONTENTS

I. Introduction	2
1. About Us	
2. How we are funded	
3. Why we are making this submission	
II. Our contributions to recognition of the ex-LGBT identity	3
4. Core Issues Trust vs Transport for London (2014)	4
5. Core Issues Trust vs Barclays Bank (2021)	4
6. Submissions to other Human Rights Bodies and to the UK Government.	7
a) Interventions to Westminster and Stormont Assembly	7
b) Interventions at the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)	9
c) Intervention at the United Nations, (53 rd session Geneva 2014, and 44 th Session, 2019).	10
III. What we are asking the Ad Hoc Committee and NI Assembly to Consider	10
7. Therapeutic Choice and the 'Conversion Therapy' bans	
8. Serious Harmful Implications for Therapy Ban bills	11
IV. Conclusion	13

QUOTATION: "...I lived the gay life for a couple of decades, and it didn't work for me, so yeah, it's no one else's place to come along and say you can't explore something different. I say, don't tell me who I am. I know myself better than anyone in the world and I know what feelings I've had throughout the course of my life...To the government I would say I think it's overstepping the mark in a free society when the government says to me that I can't pursue a certain way of life. I should be free to pursue the kind of sexual relationships with other adults that I want to and to get help to do that I want to explore my heterosexual side and I think I've got the right to do that. If I've been harmed, please tell me how I've been harmed because I have not experienced that - I've experienced freedom".

Rob, (name changed) London. (see video: [here](https://video.core-issues.org/v/584)¹)

¹ <https://video.core-issues.org/v/584>

I. Introduction

1. About Us

[Core Issues Trust](#) (CIT)² was founded in 2007, registered as a [limited company in 2011](#)³ and with the [Charity Commission of Northern Ireland](#)⁴ in 2016. Our registered office is in Ballynahinch, Northern Ireland. There are two current projects associated with CIT. The first is the [International Federation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice](#)⁵ (IFTCC). This is a separate legal entity and is separately [registered in GB with Companies House](#)⁶ registered at Wimpole Street, in London. The IFTCC works with professional persons wishing to identify with our [ethical standards and practice guidelines](#). The second CIT project works with young people to platform their voices concerning the right to leave unwanted same-sex attractions and gender confusion. Information about this CIT project (X-Out-Loud) can be found via its website [xoutloud.com](#)⁷. We advocate the rights and freedoms of individuals who are discriminated against because of their formerly LGBT identity. Watch their video stories, [here](#)⁸. For a more detailed visual presentation explaining our views and work, see [Voices of the Silenced \(2018\)](#)⁹ available in 13 languages.

We are an educational organisation concerned with the promotion of learning and the understanding of Christian belief and the practice of the Christian life. We believe that our organisation contributes to the public benefit as a registered charity. Part of our work is one-to-one counselling and mentoring, and the provision of information about therapeutic possibilities for those who seek clarification about this or wish to be put in contact with professionals who might assist them. Core Issues Trust does not itself offer professional psychotherapy, but we may refer persons to suitably qualified as psychotherapists. Please refer to the Core Issues Trust Safeguarding Policy document for detail on our *modus operandi*: [“Out of Harm’s Way: Safeguarding at Core Issues Trust \(2020\)”](#)¹⁰.

2. How we are funded

CIT, the IFTCC and X-Out-Loud are funded by donations from supporters. A small number of businesses and charitable trusts have donated over the years. 98% of funding comes from the UK. No UK government or European Union funds have ever been allocated or awarded to our charity.

3. Why we are making this submission

Attempts to ignore formerly gay or ex-LGBT persons are clearly apparent. Governments typically appear to enforce only one perspective, disallowing any serious challenge to LGBT ideology and this may lead to viewpoint discrimination.

² <https://www.core-issues.org/>

³ <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/NI606015>

⁴ <https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/charity-details/?regId=105095&subId=0>

⁵ <https://iftcc.org/>

⁶ <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/10910877>

⁷ <https://www.xoutloud.com/>

⁸ <https://www.xoutloud.com/the-uk-heroes/>

⁹ <https://video.core-issues.org/v/563>

¹⁰ https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File///Safeguarding/Out_of_Harm_s_Way_Final_11.05.20.pdf

Culminating in the UK Government's [2018 National LGBT Survey Report](#)¹¹ and [LGBT Action Plan](#)¹² the government has made clear its intention to ban therapeutic choice or what it wrongly calls "Conversion Therapy". Such intentions have been repeated by the [United Nations Report on 'Conversion Therapy'](#)¹³. Attempts by the Ozanne Foundation (2018) to claim all faith communities are aligned with the government's survey and action plan through its ["Faith and Sexuality Survey 2018"](#)¹⁴, have all been promoted by national UK media without reference to any dissenting view.

The International Federation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice (IFTCC) has responded in detail to the all of the above initiatives, pointing out grave methodological flaws with the government survey (which disallowed any formerly LGBT-identified persons to contribute), and the Faith and Sexuality Survey which indeed captured the views of those who claimed to have been positively impacted by therapeutic or counselling interventions, but chose to ignore them in its findings and conclusions. In summary the IFTCC has offered:

1. ["A Response to the UK Government' Proposed Ban on Therapeutic Choice"](#) (2018)¹⁵ ;
2. [A Critical Analysis of the Faith and Sexuality Survey \(2018\)](#)¹⁶ ;
3. [Response to the UN's Victor Madrigal-Borloz](#) Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. The IFTCC has also responded to the
4. [German Government's recent initiative to ban "conversion Therapy" \(2020\)](#)¹⁷ and also to the
5. [Canadian Government's 2020 initiative](#)¹⁸, which was a similar initiative.

Sexual orientation encompasses three dimensions: sexual identity, attraction and behaviour. Some people find these dimensions to be in different directions. Some find their attractions are mixed, or fluid and able to change.⁵⁶

We believe, on the basis of the evidence shown in the above documentation, that the rights and freedoms of adult persons to hold to a sexual identity of their choice are being denied to formerly LGBT persons who are now ex-gay. We also believe the right to professional and pastoral care consistent with a persons' world view or conscience is similarly being denied to those who do believe that sexual 'orientation' is not innate and immutable.

Our submission is made in the hope that the Northern Ireland Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights for the region will recognise and recommend the right to self- identity of former LGBT persons, along with (1) their right to move away from unwanted, practices, identities,

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-lgbt-survey-summary-report>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lgbt-action-plan-2018-improving-the-lives-of-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-people>

¹³ <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/53>

¹⁴ <https://ozanne.foundation/faith-sexuality-survey-2018/>

¹⁵ https://d3uxejw946d7m5.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/IFTCC_Response_to_UK_Government_Ban_on_Therapeutic_Choice_v2.pdf?x88743

¹⁶ https://d3uxejw946d7m5.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/FSS-Response_web.pdf?x88743

¹⁷ https://d3uxejw946d7m5.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/IFTCC_Statement_on_Legislative_Proposal_of_the_German_Bundestag_4-5-20_English.pdf?x88743

¹⁸ https://d3uxejw946d7m5.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/IFTCC_Letter_to_Canadian_MPs_2020-11-18.pdf?x88743

attractions and behaviours and (2) their right of access professional and pastoral help to assist them in this trajectory.

II. Our contributions to recognition of the ex-LGBT identity

Core Issues Trust won the right to a Judicial Review of a ban imposed by then Mayor of London Boris Johnston, to prevent adverts approved by the Advertising Standards Authority placed by the Trust on 100 London buses. These were parodied responses to previous Stonewall adverts placed on 1000 buses.

4. Core Issues Trust vs Transport for London

In the Court of Appeal, the Master of the Rolls and two other senior judges issued a [ruling](#)¹⁹ indicating that the term 'ex-gay' functioned like the protected characteristics of sexual orientation. The Trust understands this to mean that in Great Britain, persons who were formerly LGBT, ex-gay or ex-trans, are protected against discrimination by the Equality Act (2010) which forbids discrimination against "past, actual or perceived sexual orientation".

[98](#):²⁰ As Mr Squires says, it would be surprising if less favourable treatment because a person in the past was homosexual, but is now heterosexual, was not equally prohibited. This does not require that "ex-gays" are to be regarded as a separate category of sexual orientation. Discrimination against a person because of his or her past actual or perceived sexual orientation, or because his or her sexual orientation has changed, is discrimination "because of....sexual orientation". There is no requirement in the EA that discrimination must relate to a person's current sexual orientation. All that is required is that the discrimination is "because of sexual orientation".

This was an important recognition of ex-LGBT identity and we request the Northern Ireland Ad Hoc Committee to recommend that persons formerly LGBT are a recognised and respected as part of a legitimate minority group in Northern Irish society.

*QUOTATION: I've struggled with that same sex attraction for most of my life. **My sexuality was awakened at a very early age inappropriately.** I wish that my feelings were never woken up before my teenage years and I just thought that I don't want this anymore. I'd become tired of it, I became tired of the one-night stands, not being fulfilled inside of my heart. About a month later on a Thursday night meeting I broke down at the end of the meeting I took a Bible with me and read about the immoral man in Corinthians and I thought this is me. I called out to the Lord and they prayed for me. My journey started there. **If people want to come out of same sex attraction and want to seek help, they should have the right to do that - because I have rights as well. Although we are minority who have come out of gay lifestyles, lesbianism and transgender and whatever - I have rights. I have rights if I want to seek help and want to be free of same sex attraction - people are being prejudice to me. I have a right too!** Simon, Newport. (see video: [here](#))²¹*

¹⁹ <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2014/34.html>

²⁰ <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2014/34.html>

²¹ <https://video.core-issues.org/v/592>

5. The National Secular Society (NSS) and Core Issues Trust vs Barclays Bank

In May 2020, Core Issues Trust was the subject of media reports^{22,23} indicating that the National Secular Society (NSS) was challenging the Trust's registration with the Northern Irish Charity Commission on the grounds that it purveyed "Conversion Therapy". The Trust issued a statement denying this accusation²⁴.

Shortly after this the Trust sustained significant online harassment which culminated in a campaign to close our bank accounts and to disrupt our charity work. Barclays bank, along with Mail Chimp and PayPal unilaterally closed our accounts. Significant interruption of our social media accounts was also experienced. The Trust filed four Serious Incident Reports to the Northern Irish Charity Commission, at the time of these events.

It also made a submission to the Westminster Government's Petitions Committee: "Written Evidence of Online Abuse the following evidence of online harassment and abuse" with specific reference to the misattribution of "Conversion Therapy" to our organisation which formed the basis of the targeted abuse the Trust was experiencing, outlined below:

The following evidence was submitted (without any subsequent follow-up or discussion):

1. Unscrupulous punitive actions or actions facilitated by providers such as PayPal, Mail Chimp and Wikipedia.
2. Evidence of orchestrated incitement to hate
3. Significant numbers of unsolicited abusive telephone calls, emails, text messages over the period 28 June to the date of this report – Sunday 5th July 2020.
4. Rising numbers of abusive Facebook and YouTube postings.
5. Harassment of Core Issues Trust via (1) personal social media profiles using inappropriate images and (2) requests to confirm unrequested pornographic accounts to the address info@core-issues.org.

The above was also reported to the **PSNI in Belfast: Case reference number 955 30/7/20**. The Investigating officer's name was Constable Wilson, with no action being taken.

Summary of contents of this submission: From Saturday 28th June 2020 – Sunday 5th July 2020, the Trust experienced a high level of online harassment towards its personnel.

1. Before or during this campaign the Trust had all **PayPal** accounts permanently terminated. The organisation's **Mailchimp** account was similarly unilaterally terminated with no warning of non-compliance.

²² <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/complaint-over-charity-status-of-gay-conversion-group-core-issues-trust-in-northern-ireland-39201914.html>

²³ <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/call-for-charity-regulators-to-remove-registered-charities-advocating-for-gay-conversion-therapy.html>

²⁴ <https://www.core-issues.org/news/response-to-national-secular-society-campaign>

2. During the time frame, a **Wikipedia page** posted libellous statements about the Trust, which is proving difficult to alter. The Trust must now resort to legal means.
3. Evidence covers social **media incitement to “badly review”**
4. Some **300 unsolicited “nuisance” calls** were received over the period with numerous hateful messages that interfered with the work of the charity and made access to our services more difficult for genuine enquiries. Evidence exists of incitements on social media platforms.
5. Several of the (nine) **social media platforms** belonging to Core Issues Trust were consistently abused, with vitriol extending to the personal profiles of those working for Core Issues Trust.
6. **Numerous unsolicited emails** were received inviting persons linked with info@core-issues.org to confirm memberships on pornographic websites or advice to attend various medical clinics
7. Inappropriate, and in some cases **“Satanic” SMS texts** were received attaching inappropriate images and encouraging CIT staff members to kill themselves and wishing their families to be raped.
8. Core Issues Trust is concerned that the apparent immunity of LGBT activist perpetrators is the legacy of the on-going disinformation provided by the “mainstream” (legacy) media. This is aggravated by refusal of the UK government to actively recognise that ex-gay persons are protected under the Equality Act of 2010, along with media claims that therapeutic choice is tantamount to “torture”.

Following this social media led campaign, and following calls on social media for Barclays to do so, **Barclays Bank** indicated by correspondence dated 13th July, 2020 that it would close accounts for both Core Issues trust and the IFTCC, by the 14th September 2020. This was then done, prompting international media attention^{25,26,27,28}.

*QUOTATION: To those who say that you repress your feelings of being lesbian, I would say to them **nobody told me to be a lesbian to begin with, nobody is telling me to stop being a lesbian. It's the change that I have inside of me that is making me more happy than I was when I was a lesbian. And nobody is stopping me to go back into that lifestyle. I have that choice - but I don't have that desire anymore. So what can I do? Homosexuality - I've never heard that it's shameful or you know when I grew up, initially it was because of the religious things that I was I went through that I knew is in the Bible, but I was not discriminating. I did not have that discrimination even when I came out as lesbian. When I was lesbian, I was not against heterosexuals, so why is it that now I don't want to work on that path and now it feels like there's a problem with that, I feel discriminated myself now because I don't want to be in that lifestyle. I feel like there's an agenda that's being pushed on to me and I don't want to be part of that. Tia, Leicester. (see video [here](#)²⁹)***

²⁵ <https://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/markets/article-8924111/Barclays-sued-gay-conversion-Christian-group.html>

²⁶ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamiewareham/2020/07/25/barclays-closes-uk-christian-charity-bank-account-offering-lgbt-conversion-therapy/>

²⁷ <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/business/ni-based-anti-gender-confusion-charity-says-barclays-bank-axed-its-account-following-social-media-campaign-2923950>

²⁸ <https://www.foxnews.com/world/christian-ministry-uk-death-threats>

²⁹ <https://video.core-issues.org/v/591>

The Trust has now issued proceedings against Barclays Bank in the Northern Irish Courts claiming that this action was discriminatory. Almost 72,000³⁰ signatories signed a petition against Barclays Bank's action. The case awaits attention.

6. Submissions to Human Rights Bodies and to the UK Government.

Core Issues Trust has sought to lobby the UK Government, the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations (UN) and occasionally, the Stormont Assembly around issues relating to freedom and rights to access professional help for unwanted same-sex attractions and gender confusions. This work is premised on the idea that individuals have the right to self-identify as being formerly gay or transgender.

a. Interventions to Westminster Parliament and Stormont Assembly

The Right to Decide (September 2012) Hard copies of the Booklet [“The Right to Decide: Seeking Justice for Choices around Unwanted Same-Sex Attractions”](#)³¹, along with letters were sent to all MPs in Parliament^{32,33,34,35}. The campaign sought to highlight the plight of individuals unhappy with their sexual identity, feelings and attractions who were not satisfied with the assumption that this was due to systemic, internalised homophobia.

The Misuse of Science by Professional Mental Health Bodies: (2013)

In May 2013 a second campaign was addressed to all members, individually of both the **UK Parliament and the Stormont Assembly**. In this campaign, we attempted to show that evidence submitted to the Government and to the Church of England by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, which has informed their responses to ‘gay marriage’, was seriously flawed, distorting medical science and replacing it with gay ideology. Equally important, the outworking of this ideology is leading to therapists being struck off by their professional bodies for assisting clients who wish to reduce their same-sex attractions. A detailed analysis of documentation submitted by the Royal College of Psychiatrists with respect to the primary sources they relied upon, was submitted to both Parliament and Stormont in the form of a hard copy of [“Beyond Critique: The Misuse of Science by Professional Mental Health Bodies” \(2013\)](#)³⁶. The research found that a high proportion of the primary sources cited were misrepresentations of what the original papers had said. The Church of England's **Pilling Commission (2013)** agreed with us as is evidenced in its report [“Working Group on Human Sexuality”](#)³⁷ (November 2013). On **Page 63 (paragraph 207)** the report states:

³⁰ <https://www.citizenngo.org/en-gb/ff/181400-tell-barclays-bank-respect-religious-freedom>

³¹ https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Downloadable_publications/The_Right_To_Decide_Newart_.pdf

³² **Conservatives** https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Campagins/The_Right_to_Decide/Conservative_letter_Final_23_September_2012_3.pdf

³³ **Labour:** https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Campagins/The_Right_to_Decide/Labour_letter_Final_23_September_2012_3.pdf

³⁴ **Independent Parties** https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Campagins/The_Right_to_Decide/Independent_and_smaller_parties_letter_23rd_September_2012_3.pdf

³⁵ **House of Bishops:** https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Campagins/The_Right_to_Decide/Bishops_letter_23rd_September_3.pdf

³⁶ https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Downloadable_publications/BYOND_CRITIQUE_2nd_edition_Inside_2clr_ART_13_1.pdf

³⁷ https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-01/GS%201929%20Working%20Group%20on%20human%20sexuality_0.pdf

“On the other hand, The Core Issues Trust point out that the three scientific papers referred to by the Royal College of Psychiatrists at this point actually refuse to attribute causation of mental health issues among gay and lesbian people to social factors... gay men and lesbians may have lifestyles that make them vulnerable to psychological disorder”.

Paragraph 211 on page 64 of the Pilling Commission’s Report similarly affirms our observations that the Royal College of Psychiatrist’s submissions to Government in the area of human sexuality, along with claims at that time, reflect inconsistencies with the papers they cite.

Issues raised by LGBT activists and Mental Health bodies concerning harm or “potential harm” began to gain momentum as so called “Conversion Therapy” came under fire. Core Issues Trust produced and distributed to MPs and Lords in Westminster³⁸ “[Out of Harm’s Way: Working ethically with Same-Sex Attracted Persons](#)”³⁹ (2013). At this time several attempts were made via private members bills to introduce bans on “Conversion therapy”, such as the [Counsellors and Psychotherapists \(Regulation\) and Conversion Therapy Bill 2017-19](#)⁴⁰. The trust has consistently tried to raise issues about the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy (sic)^{41,42,43}. This is a consensus document stigmatising any change-allowing talking therapy, which in 2017 incorporated Transgender issues.

Core Issues Trust wished to make the case for a more balanced understanding about the nature of therapeutic and counselling interventions for assisting with unwanted same-sex attractions in a climate where any such intervention was rejected on the basis of “you can’t cure what isn’t diseased”. Counselling and therapy, of course, don’t necessarily operate in contexts of mental health disease. Bereavement counselling for example, or relationship counselling do not presume clients have poor mental health. As in these cases, interventions for those with unwanted same-sex attractions are generally *talking* therapies.

No therapeutic intervention is entirely without risk, and the range of conditions for which therapists offer help may be ranked conceptually in terms of risk of harm, from the least to the most risky. At one end of the spectrum, a man may seek help to overcome his nerves in making a speech at his daughter’s wedding. At the other, a man may feel that he is actually a woman ‘trapped in a man’s body’ and may be offered help even to the point of having major surgery and being given hormone treatment to achieve his life goals – with clearly serious potential risks should all not go according to plan.

³⁸ https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Campagins/Out_of_Harms_Way/Letter_for_MPs_and_LORDs_OOHW_November_2013.pdf

³⁹ https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Downloadable_publications/NewARTWORK2clr.pdf

⁴⁰ <https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/counsellorsandpsychotherapistsregulationandconversiontherapy.html>

⁴¹ https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Statements/Statements_2014/Statement_by_Core_Issues_Trust_18th_December_2014.pdf

⁴² https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Statements/Statements_2015/CIT_Statement_7_June_2015_National_Professional_Bodies_Refuse_to_Provide_Evidence_.pdf

⁴³ https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Statements/Statements_2014/CIT_Statement_3_March_2014_UKCP_Consensus_Statement_Feb_2014_FINAL_1.pdf

b. Interventions by CIT to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

The OSCE is the largest Human Rights forum in Europe. Since 2012 Core Issues Trust has made regular interventions at the OSCE's Human Dimensions Implementation Meetings (HDIM), seeking recognition of the former or ex-LGBT identity and arguing for the rights and freedoms of this minority group. It has consistently raised the matter of so-called "conversion therapy" bans as a means of denying rights to this minority. It has actively participated in plenary sessions^{44,45,46} and organised approved side-events at these events. Below is a list of plenary interventions made for the period 2012 - 2019:

1. [1st October 2012](#)⁴⁷ Freedom of speech to articulate alternative, non-affirming responses to homosexuality is an important right to be protected.
2. [8th November 2012](#)⁴⁸ Ostracising difference: the new ideology of professional psychotherapeutic bodies that shame, and expel members who support autonomous individuals, seeking help to achieve personal emancipation, by reducing unwanted same-sex attractions aligned with their personal values.
3. [3rd October 2012](#)⁴⁹ Abuse by professional bodies in denying clients autonomy in achieving sexual identities which refuse to embrace homosexual feelings - thereby penalising professional psychotherapists.
4. [3rd July 2014](#)⁵⁰ Marking the growth of intolerance towards the religiously orthodox in the United Kingdom who reject state collusion with gay advocacy ideologies which threaten personal and religious autonomy and freedoms of expression.
5. [30th September 2014](#)⁵¹ Protecting Competent Professional Guidance and Therapeutic Care for Unwanted Sexual Feelings
6. [29th September 2015](#)⁵² How evidence, rights, freedoms and conscience are trampled through view-point discrimination under the UK's aggressive secular state
7. [29th September 2016](#)⁵³ Pansexual Humanism: The UK's new State Orthodoxy – Supporting the intolerance.
8. [13 September 2018](#)⁵⁴ Core Issues Trust: A Response to the UK Government's Proposed Ban on "Conversion Therapy"
9. [24th September 2019](#)⁵⁵ Malta Government's public denial of the Ex-Gay minority and viewpoint discrimination in Chapter 567 of the Affirmation of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression Act.
10. [24th September 2019](#).⁵⁶ A call to reject "Conversion Therapy" bans in the UK

⁴⁴ <https://youtu.be/VUL2unl-LD0>

⁴⁵ <https://youtu.be/UNOO-rRoL0Q>

⁴⁶ <https://youtu.be/6xx-DGBRiMc>

⁴⁷ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/a/94519.pdf>

⁴⁸ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/4/97012.pdf>

⁴⁹ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/f/2/94769.pdf>

⁵⁰ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/9/120784.pdf>

⁵¹ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/9/124648.pdf>

⁵² <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/9/186376.pdf>

⁵³ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/6/269981.pdf>

⁵⁴ https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/b/394403_0.pdf

⁵⁵ https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/4/432356_0.pdf

⁵⁶ https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/3/432377_1.pdf

c. Interventions at the United Nations

Media, politicians, and lobbyists often cite as ‘conversion therapy’ grievous psychiatric practices which in the UK could only be prescribed by medical practitioners, and which were desisted last century. Non-medical counsellors had no part in those practices.

53rd Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2014)

In November 2014 Core Issues Trust staff witnessed⁵⁷ the National Centre for Lesbian Rights (NCLR, USA) platforming at the United Nations Committee Against Torture, claiming that by failing to outlaw the practice of ‘Conversion Therapy,’ America violates its compliance with the Convention Against Torture to which it is a signatory. The NCLR intervention implies rates of harm higher than for any other therapeutic category, but they have presented no evidence from any representative samples of Sexual Orientation Change Efforts (SOCE) consumers. In foregrounding highly controversial testimonies of abuse - as the NCLR did in the case of [Samuel Brinton](#),⁵⁸ who claims sustained but unsubstantiated therapeutic abuse - the ideological nature of their argument is apparent. He claimed to have undergone “conversion therapy” but has not identified exactly when and where this was done. Further, he has raised no complaint against the alleged perpetrator (there is no known registered complaint against any professional). Moreover, no prosecution against this father is recorded. At the time, Core Issues Trust released a statement addressing [“\(T\)he UN Committee Against Torture’s Claim that Responsible Sexual Orientation Change Efforts \(SOCEs\) make use of Electro Shock Treatments”](#)⁵⁹. CIT has no standing at the UN, and nothing further could be submitted to the UN by way of intervention beyond informal meetings and lobby attempts undertaken at the time.

Submission to UN’s Expert on so-called “Conversion Therapy Practices, 2019”

In December 2019, the IFTCC responded to the consultation called by the UN’s Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and gender identity. This was for consideration towards a Report from the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity with focus on practices of so-called “conversion therapy” for the 44th Session of the Human Rights Council. The IFTCC Submission can be viewed [here](#)⁶⁰. The intervention is [listed in the UN’s report link](#)⁶¹ under “Civil Society Organisations” that made interventions. This particular intervention is referenced on page 16 and footnote 124 of the “Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence

⁵⁷ https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Statements/Statements_2014/Core_Issues_Trust_Statement_on_UN_CAT_committee_13th_November_2014.pdf

⁵⁸ Brinton has been repeatedly exposed as either fabricating or being unwilling to substantiate his claims: <https://www.sambrintonhoax.com>

⁵⁹ https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File/Statements/Statements_2014/Core_Issues_Trust_Statement_on_UN_CAT_committee_13th_November_2014.pdf

⁶⁰ <https://d3uxejw946d7m5.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/IFTCC-to-UN-HRC-individual-Submission-to-Victor-Madrigal-FINAL-2019-12-21.pdf?x88743>

⁶¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SexualOrientationGender/Pages/ReportOnConversiontherapy.aspx>

and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity”, submitted in July 202 at the 44th UN Session⁶².

III. What we are asking the Ad Hoc Committee and NI Assembly to Consider

There have been several calls for banning so-called “conversion therapy” in Northern Ireland^{63,64,65,66}. This issue represents the one-sided way in which rights issues are being dealt with. The problem with this term is that it confuses unethical practices (aversion therapies and coercive methods) with standard, voluntary psychotherapeutic and counselling approaches. Opponents to “conversion therapy” appear to equate all therapy that is open to a client’s goal of change with harmful “conversion” therapy utilizing aversive or coercive methods. The characterization of all change allowing therapy as harmful stigmatizes and puts at risk ethical therapy that uses mainstream therapy methods and has been demonstrated to be helpful and effective for many. We believe such calls will impact negatively on the rights and freedoms of former LGBT persons.

Serious Harmful Implications for Therapy Bans

Our arguments have been explained more fully in a 2020 document “[Serious Harmful Implications of Therapy Ban Bills](#)⁶⁷” (IFTCC). We respectfully urge the Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland not to oppose ethical contemporary therapy that is open to clients’ goals of change for sexual attraction or behaviour or for gender identity or expression they do not want. We would be happy to submit further evidence to support our concerns. No one should take away the freedom of formerly LGBT persons and their right to develop attractions consistent with their beliefs or goals, or to identify as they choose, to live the life that brings them joy – and to have support to do so. To affirm their ex-LGBT identity but to disallow therapeutic interventions to support their identities is unacceptable.

A bill of rights contains human rights protections for everyone

According to the ad hoc committee on the NI Bill of Rights, “a bill of rights contains human rights protections for everyone – it is a list of the laws a country agrees to make to protect all the people who live there. It can also contain guiding principles or ideas”.

We understand “everyone” to include those who self-identify or are identified as formerly LGBT.

1. Civil law has indicated that the Equality Act of 2010 in GB law protects “ex-gay” persons because discrimination against any perceived orientation, past present or

⁶² <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G20/108/68/PDF/G2010868.pdf?OpenElement>

⁶³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-54354400>

⁶⁴ <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/ni/?id=2020-11-03.5.19>

⁶⁵ <https://www.irishlegal.com/article/conversion-therapy-for-lgbt-people-to-be-banned>

⁶⁶ https://www.change.org/p/northern-ireland-health-minister-ban-conversion-therapy-in-northern-ireland?utm_content=cl_sharecopy_23568156_en-GB%3A1&recruited_by_id=ec6b1820-cb5d-11ea-8b66-a3c53aa186f7&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copypink&utm_campaign=psf_combo_share_initial&utm_term=psf_combo_share_initial

⁶⁷ <https://d3uxeiw946d7m5.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Serious-Harmful-Implications-of-Therapy-Ban-Bills.pdf?x88743>

future is discrimination and outlawed by the Act⁶⁸. **We ask the Ad Hoc Committee to clarify how this is the same principle – the protection of the formerly LGBT – is enshrined in Northern Irish Law.** We ask the Ad Hoc Committee to clarify this for those formerly LGBT in Northern Ireland.

2. **We request that in a Bill of rights for Northern Ireland, LGBT rights do not trump the rights of those who no longer identify as LGBT.** We ask the committee to recognise that “gay” and “straight” are socio-political terms that are incapable of recognising the complexity of mixed attractions and life experiences consistent with sexual fluidity.
3. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU, 2017)⁶⁹ prevents signatory Mental Health Providers from supporting client goals to reduce unwanted same sex or transgender behaviours, feelings or attractions. **We ask the Ad Hoc Committee to make interventions to the coming MOU Review (2021) challenging this document on the grounds that it discriminates against formerly LGBT persons:**

Example: If a married man falls in love with a woman other than his legal wife, and he seeks help to manage, reduce or move away from the behaviour, feelings or attractions that cause him distress, he is free to approach a counsellor to access such help. A counsellor registered with any signatory of the MOU may assist such a client. If, however a client who is married to an opposite sex partner seeks counselling after falling in love with a same-sex partner, he/she may not receive counselling that may end their behaviour, feelings or attractions according to the MOU. Any clinician or professional mental health worker providing support of these client goals, will be liable to charges of unethical practice.

4. **We ask the Ad Hoc Committee to acquaint itself with the arguments** against banning therapeutic choice in Northern Ireland (summarised in the IFTCC paper [“Serious Harmful Implications of Therapy Ban Bills, 2020”](#)⁷⁰) concerning proposed banning of therapeutic choice in Northern Ireland (commonly called “Conversion Therapy”).
5. **We ask the Ad Hoc Committee to consider the** Bell v Tavistock judicial review.⁵⁷ The case review was about age of competence to consent to treatment, but central to the case is that a person’s perception of self can change. The state should neither dictate that a person may not change their mind nor deny such a person support.
6. We respectfully **urge you recognise the right to access therapeutic, counselling and pastoral help consistent with a client’s conscience and world view and not to oppose ethical contemporary therapy that is open to clients’ goals of change for sexual**

⁶⁸ Cf page 4 section 4 footnote 17 of this document for Core Issues Trust vs Transport for London case on and the intervention by Mr Squires (paragraph 97ff) in the judgement: <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2014/34.html>.

⁶⁹ <https://www.bacp.co.uk/media/6526/memorandum-of-understanding-v2-reva-jul19.pdf>

⁷⁰ <https://d3uxeiw946d7m5.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Serious-Harmful-Implications-of-Therapy-Ban-Bills.pdf?x88743>

⁵⁷ Bell v Tavistock Judiciary England and Wales 01 Dec 2020 High Court Neutral Citation Number: [2020] EWHC 3274 (Admin) Case No: CO/60/2020

attraction or behaviour or for gender identity or other expression they do not want.

No one should take away their freedom and their right to develop attractions consistent with their beliefs or goals, to identify as they choose, to live the life that brings them joy – and to have support to do so.

IV. In Conclusion

We have indicated our long-term investment in defending the rights and freedoms of the formerly LGBT people and have asked the Ad Hoc committee to consider five requests based on our work. Finally, to quote the IFTCC 2019 [Post-conference Statement](#):

We reject widespread media misrepresentation and disinformation which has uncritically adopted “conversion therapy” nomenclature based on the philosophical and ideological premise that sexual “orientation” is innate and immutable. We know of no mental health guilds, however radical, that say sexual “orientation” is inborn and unchangeable. Their consensus on that and definitive research^{71,59} have established that the development of sexual “orientation” is somewhat influenced by genes but not definitively so and mostly influenced by experience in an individual’s environment that may begin very early—like other complex human traits professional therapists help people diminish or change every day⁷².

Thank you for your consideration,

Michael R Davidson, PhD.

CEO: Core Issues Trust

Chairman IFTCC

Belfast 25th January, 2021

*QUOTATION: I think it's important that my story is shared because I haven't come from anyone telling me that I am not allowed to be gay, or to have relationships with men. I've come from the background where it was accepted completely and I found out for myself; but it just doesn't work, it just doesn't work. What I would say to members of parliament is that I would ask them to think who stands to gain from this ban and who stands to lose? The people who will gain I suspect are people with very sinister political agendas and that doesn't sit right with me so that's why I'm sharing my story
Sam, Devon 29 years. (See video: <https://video.core-issues.org/v/583>⁷³)*

⁵⁸ Andrea Ganna, Karin J. H. Verweij, Michel G. Nivard, Robbee Wedow. Vol 365, Issue 6456 30 August 2019 Large-scale GWAS reveals insights into the genetic architecture of same-sex sexual behavior,

⁵⁹ Emily Drabant Conley, Stat, 9 September 2019 Same-sex sexual behavior and genes: like love, the answer is complicated
<https://www.statnews.com/2019/09/09/same-sex-sexual-behavior-genes/>

⁶⁰ https://d3uxejw946d7m5.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/IFTCC_Postconference_Statement_2019_English.pdf?x88743

⁷³ <https://video.core-issues.org/v/583>