

# Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Bill

[AS INTRODUCED]

## LEGISLATIVE COMPETENCE

At Introduction the Member in charge of the Bill, Mr Eóin Tennyson, had made the following statement under Standing Order 30:

*“In my view the Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Bill would be within the legislative competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly.”*



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## **BILL**

TO

Criminalise conversion practices.

**B**E IT ENACTED by being passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly and assented to by His Majesty as follows:

### **Offence of providing conversion therapy**

1.—(1) A person commits an offence if—

- (a) the person provides or carries out conversion therapy in relation to another person (“the victim”),
- 5 (b) the person has the intent of changing or suppressing the sexual orientation or gender identity of the victim, and
- (c) the victim suffers physical or psychological harm as a consequence of the therapy.

10 (2) It is a defence for the person to show that the therapy was reasonable in the particular circumstances.

(3) It is not a defence that the victim consented to the therapy.

(4) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

- (a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum (or both),
- 15 (b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine (or both).

### **Offence of engaging in coercive conversion behaviour**

2.—(1) A person commits an offence if—

- 20 (a) the person engages in coercive behaviour in relation to another person (“the victim”),
- (b) the person has the intent of changing or suppressing the sexual orientation or gender identity of the victim, and

(c) the victim suffers physical or psychological harm as a consequence of the behaviour.

(2) It is a defence for the person to show that the coercive behaviour was reasonable in the particular circumstances.

5 (3) It is not a defence that the victim consented to the coercive behaviour.

(4) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

(a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum (or both),

10 (b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine (or both).

### **Offence of removing a person from Northern Ireland for the purposes of conversion practices**

**3.**—(1) A person commits an offence if the person, in relation to another person (“the victim”)—

15 (a) causes the victim to leave Northern Ireland, or facilitates them leaving, for the purposes of being subject to conversion therapy or coercive behaviour,

(b) has the intent that the therapy or behaviour has the effect of changing or suppressing the sexual orientation or gender identity of the victim, and

20 (c) is reckless as to whether the victim suffers physical or psychological harm as a consequence of the therapy or behaviour.

(2) It is a defence for the person to show that their actions were reasonable in the particular circumstances.

(3) It is not a defence that the victim consented to leaving Northern Ireland.

25 (4) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

(a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum (or both),

(b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine (or both).

### **Conversion therapy**

**4.**—(1) In this Act, a person provides or carries out conversion therapy if the person provides or carries out any of the following—

(a) counselling or any form of talking therapy,

(b) coaching or instruction,

35 (c) a treatment, or purported treatment.

(2) It is immaterial if the therapy is provided free of charge or for payment.

(3) This Act does not apply in respect of therapy provided or carried out—

(a) by an individual registered by, or subject to regulation by, any of the following regulatory bodies—

40 (i) the General Medical Council,

(ii) the Health and Care Professions Council,

- (iii) the General Pharmaceutical Council, or
  - (iv) the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, and
  - (b) in accordance with the standards and code of ethics of that regulatory body that apply at the time the therapy is carried out or provided.
- 5 (4) The Department of Health may, by order, amend subsection (3)(a) by adding, removing, or modifying a reference to a regulatory body.
- (5) The Department of Health may only make the order if a draft of it has been laid before, and approved by resolution of, the Assembly.
- 10 (6) In this section “regulatory body” has the same meaning as in section 25 of the National Health Service Reform and Health Care Professions Act 2002.

### **Coercive behaviour**

- 5.—(1) In this Act, coercive behaviour means—
- (a) behaviour directed at the victim that is violent,
  - (b) behaviour directed at the victim that is threatening,
  - 15 (c) controlling, regulating or monitoring the victim’s day-to-day activities,
  - (d) depriving or restricting the victim’s freedom of action, or
  - (e) making the victim feel frightened, humiliated, degraded, punished or intimidated.
- (2) Coercive behaviour does not include failure to do a thing.
- 20 (3) Coercive behaviour—
- (a) means behaviour on two or more occasions,
  - (b) may include—
    - (i) the same behaviour on a number of occasions, or
    - (ii) different behaviour on different occasions.

### **Sexual orientation and gender identity**

- 6.—(1) In this Act, a reference to a victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity includes—
- (a) what the victim considers it to be, and
  - (b) what the person considers it to be.
- 30 (2) A reference to a victim’s sexual orientation includes the victim having no sexual orientation towards other persons.

### **Intent to change or suppress**

- 7.—(1) For the purposes of this Act, there is no intent to change or suppress sexual orientation or gender identity if—
- 35 (a) there is no intent to direct a victim towards a particular sexual orientation or gender identity,
  - (b) the intent is solely to express beliefs or opinions, without directing a victim towards a particular sexual orientation or gender identity, or

(c) the intent is to affirm a sexual orientation or gender identity which the victim considers is, or may be, their sexual orientation or gender identity.

5 (2) For the purposes of determining whether there is an intent to change or suppress sexual orientation or gender identity, it is immaterial whether the conversion therapy or coercive behaviour changes, suppresses, or is capable of changing or suppressing, the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity.

### **Psychological harm**

8. In this Act, psychological harm includes fear, alarm or distress.

### **No right to claim trial by jury**

10 9. In Article 29(1) of the Magistrates' Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 (right to claim trial by jury for certain summary offences), after sub-paragraph (s) insert—

“(t) section 1, 2 or 3 of the Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Act (Northern Ireland) 2026.”.

### **Commencement**

15 10. This Act comes into operation at the end of the period of 12 months after the date it receives Royal Assent.

### **Short title**

20 11. This Act may be cited as the Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Act (Northern Ireland) 2026.



# **Conversion Practices (Criminalisation) Bill**

[AS INTRODUCED]

A Bill to criminalise conversion practices.

Introduced by: Mr Eóin Tennyson

On: 30 June 2026

Bill Type: Non-Executive Bill

## **ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS**

**An Explanatory and Financial Memorandum is printed separately as  
NIA Bill 45/22-27 EFM.**





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