

Scottish Government Response to the Expert Advisory Group on Ending Conversion Practices Report

October 2022



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I welcome the Report and Recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group on Ending Conversion Practices, which set out proposals to bring an end to conversion practices in Scotland.

In the 2021-2022 Programme for Government, and Bute House Agreement, we made a commitment to introduce legislation to ban conversion practices that is as comprehensive as possible within Scotland's devolved powers by the end of 2023. This commitment has recently been reiterated in the 2022-2023 Programme for Government.

To drive this work forward, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government announced in November 2021 that an Expert Advisory Group on Ending Conversion Practices (the 'Group') would be established to inform Scotland's approach to ending conversion practices, which aim to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. The Group was time-limited and ran from March to September 2022. It was composed of experts in their field from LGBT+ organisations, faith and belief organisations and communities, mental health, the law, human rights, academia, and people with personal lived experience of conversion practices.

I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to each member of the Group for their time, expertise and dedication in producing this Report. I especially want to thank those members with lived experiences of conversion practices; the bravery you showed by continually stepping forward to tell your story in the fight for change is admirable and inspiring. Your contributions and insights will help ensure that these abhorrent practices never again happen in Scotland and are consigned to history. I thank you for that.

The Report sets out 32 guiding principles to inform our approach as we develop measures to end conversion practices in Scotland. The Group categorised these guiding principles into five key areas, which are: conversion practices in the context of human rights; a definition of conversion practices; measures under criminal law and enforcement mechanisms; measures outside criminal law; and LGBT+ people of colour and minority ethnic faith experiences of conversion practices. Each of the guiding principles is supported by detailed recommendations.

The Report makes it clear that whilst it is essential we get the criminal legislation right, it is equally important that the non-criminal measures, such as education, support services and awareness raising, are considered with every step we take.

Many of the guiding principles and recommendations outlined by the Group are complex and interact with a range of ministerial portfolios as well as bodies outside government. We will carefully analyse and reflect on them over the coming months with the same attention and care that the Group put into making them. We want to ensure that all the measures that we take are deliverable and bring about real and lasting change to the lives of LGBT+ people in Scotland.

We will work closely with the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee as we move towards the introduction of the Bill in 2023. We will also engage with the wider public through a public consultation on our proposals for legislation.

I once again thank the Group for its hard work and for the comprehensive Report, which will help to inform the measures we adopt as we progress with the legislative process and other action to end conversion practices and ensure adequate measures are established to support victims and survivors.

I want a Scotland in which everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, is safe from these harmful and discriminatory practices.



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