

Professional Standards Authority ban misled by Royal College of Psychiatrists

In a move designed to end the practice of 'conversion' therapy, the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) has given its support to what is effectively a ban on therapy for people wishing to reduce or change homosexual behaviours and desiresⁱ. In supporting the 14 signatories of the UKCP's 'Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy'ⁱⁱ, the PSA now avows not to accredit any register listing professionals who accede to client requests to reduce homosexual behaviour, citing as the reason its 'equalities duties'.

In the United Kingdom it remains legal to use recognised modalities to assist clients wishing to reduce unwanted same-sex attractions, including 'Reparative Therapy[©]'.

But the action in effect precludes qualified and practising professionals from applying any recognised, standard modality to clients presenting with unwanted same-sex attractions, other than to help them accept homosexual feelings. This denies these individuals their freedom and right to seek help to change according to their own autonomous decision and preferred values. This then denies individuals their right to identify as 'ex-gay'.

The Equality Act of 2010 however, rejects discrimination against any sexual orientation, (past, actual or perceived) including those who experience or aspire to change orientation, as was established in a 2014 High Court appellate ruling.ⁱⁱⁱ

The science behind the PSA's move was provided by the Royal College of Psychiatrists who up to the time when the first same sex marriages were conducted in the UK (29 March 2014) claimed that "sexual orientation is biological in nature, determined by genetic factors and/or the early uterine environment. Sexual orientation is therefore not a choice"^{iv}.

Since April 2014, however, following a robust challenge to their interpretation of the evidence (Beyond Critique, 2013^v) the College website now admits: Orientation is caused "by a combination of biological and postnatal environmental factors," and "It is not the case that sexual orientation is immutable or might not vary to some extent in a person's life." In addition, having previously claimed that discrimination was the major source of the well-documented mental health problems in the gay community, the College now also admits that "Lifestyle issues may be important in some gay men and lesbians, particularly with respect to higher rates of substance misuse."^{vi}

Given these recent changes evident in the Royal College of Psychiatrists' 2014 Statement, the PSA's ban appears unsafe and based on a disputable reading of its 'equalities duty' and mis-application of the Equality Act 2010. The move, initiated by the Minister of Care and Support Norman Lamb MP, in close association with psychiatrist Professor Michael King, has by stealth through the PSA, effected the very ban which in 2014 Mr Lamb said (according to the Hansard^{vii} record), the government should not effect^{viii}, a position which public opinion at the time supported^{ix}. The move once again appears to be calculated by the government to court the gay vote before the General Election, under the guise of 'public safety'.

Following earlier complaints to the Royal College of Psychiatrists^x, a formal complaint to the General Medical Council (GMC) will now be submitted.

Council of Reference: Mr Andrew Comiskey (CEO Desert Stream /Living Waters), USA; Professor Robert Gagnon, (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary), USA; Rev David Johnston, (Presbyterian, NI); Andrea Minichiello Williams (CEO Christian Legal Centre) GB; Canon Chris Sugden (C of E, GB); Mr Dermot O'Callaghan (Church of Ireland, NI); Rev Hadden Wilson (Baptist, NI)

The PSA is a regulating authority, reviewing annually the nine UK Statutory bodies which regulate health and social care work in the UK, including the GMC and those doctors practising under the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

In banning registers including professionals offering sexual orientation change efforts (SOCEs), even when offered to clients following the informed consent of autonomous individuals, and without a transparent process of reviewing the evidence, the PSA confirms its role as the purveyor of LGBTI ideology rather than a guardian of public safety based on replicable, reliable scientific evidence grounded in peer reviewed research.

Core Issues Trust is a Christian organisation recognised in the UK as a charity for tax purposes. It supports the regulation of counsellors and psychotherapists, and offers counselling and therapeutic support to its clients using standard practices to assist individuals, who for religious or other reasons, wish to reduce homosexual feelings. It supports LGBTI dignity.

Further information: Dr Michael R Davidson, Director Core Issues Trust 07833098998

Notes for Editors:

- ⁱ **PSA** 16 January, 2015. Professional Standard Authority supports action by Accredited Registers on Conversion Therapy. <http://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/library/document-detail?id=b81f5a9e-2ce2-6f4b-9ceb-ff0000b2236b>
- ⁱⁱ **UKCP**, Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy. http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/UKCP_Documents/policy/MoU-conversiontherapy.pdf
- ⁱⁱⁱ **Paragraph 98 CO72842012**, In the Court of Appeal (Civil Division) On Appeal from the High Court, Queen's Bench Division, Administrative Court, Before Mrs Justice Lang, Master of the Rolls, Lord Justice Briggs, And Lord Justice Christopher Clarke: <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2014/34.html>

"...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".
- ^{iv} **RCPsych**. <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/workinpsychiatry/specialinterestgroups/gaylesbian/submissiontothecofe.aspx>
- ^v **O'Callaghan, D and May, Dr P.**, 2013 'Beyond Critique: The Misuse of Science by UK Professional Mental Health Bodies'. <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Beyond-Critique-Misuse-Science-Professional/dp/0957373961>
- ^{vi} **RCPsych**. http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/PS02_2014.pdf
- ^{vii} **Hansard** 20 Nov 2013 : **Column 385WH2** Gay to Straight Conversion Therapy"
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131120/halltext/131120h0002.htm#13112084000001>
- ^{viii} **Express**, 3 November 2013, 'Abhorrent 'cure' for homosexuality will not be banned, says Government minister'
<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/444155/Gay-conversion-therapy-is-abhorrent-but-we-won-t-ban-it-says-Government-minister>
- ^{ix} **ComRes Poll 2014**. ComRes interviewed 2,003 British adults online between 9th and 10th April 2014. Data were weighted to be representative of all GB adults aged 18+. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. Originally here: <http://www.comres.co.uk/poll/1200/core-issues-trust-therapy-poll.htm>, now here: http://www.core-issues.org/uploads/Core%20Issues%20Trust_Therapy%20Poll_April%202014.pdf
- ^x **Complaint to Royal College of Psychiatrists**, 2013 <http://www.core-issues.org/uploads/Ltr%20to%20Pres%20RCPsych%20Apr2013%20final.pdf> and <http://www.core-issues.org/uploads/Reply%20to%20RCPsych%20June%202013%20Dr%20Peter%20May%20Mr%20Dermot%20O'Callaghan.pdf>