

The UK government is going down a dangerous path in its zeal to ban 'conversion therapies'

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On Tuesday the government announced an LGBT Action Plan, and top of the list is the determination to 'stamp out' what it simplistically calls 'conversion therapies' for sexual orientation and gender identity¹. The usual media circus flared up as it does around this subject. Most journalists and commentators have not realised how dangerous this really is. The United Kingdom has turned a corner with this announcement in that it is attacking fundamental rights and freedoms which historically it used to support².

Why ex-gays are perceived as a threat

Gay activists clearly perceive the very claim of ex-gay people to exist to be a serious threat. This is the real reason they want the entire ex-gay movement silenced, and their way to do that is to campaign worldwide to ban therapy that aims to reduce unwanted same-sex attraction and to increase heterosexual attraction. The real reason this therapy has been attacked and allegedly 'discredited' by gay activists is precisely that many people have experienced change to a greater or lesser degree³. Thousands of people around the world have either left the gay lifestyle or have never acted upon same-sex attraction.

It is vitally important to grasp that 'gay' is a sexual identity not just a sexual orientation⁴. It is a social category and around it an entire apparatus of rights and privileges has been built which props up an entire subculture that has now taken over the government. This has led to the redefinition of marriage and family life in law and public policy, with very damaging consequences all around⁵.

Ex-gays concluded they did not like homosexual behaviour

The very existence of ex-gays threatens to undermine all this. For essentially ex-gays are saying two things. First, they do not believe in the philosophy of the LGB movement, even though they have been same-sex attracted. Second, to be blunt, they have concluded that they do not like homosexual behaviour and do not want to engage in it. They have noted the clash between the form and design of the human body and same-sex sexual behaviour which goes against this. This clash troubles them, and they cannot accept the insistence

by LGBT activists and their 'allies' that they should behave like this simply because their feelings point that way.

Change of sexual identity from gay to straight really happens and is a threat to the LGB movement as it potentially involves reduction in the pool of homosexual sexual partners. What's more, those who leave frequently have little good to say about the subculture.

Most clients had intrinsic motivations for accessing therapy

The results of the government LGBT Survey⁶ show that a majority of respondents who had had therapy are non-religious. These results can be found in Annex 5, 'Safety', Q142-143. There is a table indicating the religion or belief of respondents who said they had had therapy. Although the table shows that Muslim and Hindu respondents were the most likely to have had therapy, the single largest group were those of no religion: 1.5% of the 63, 690 non-religious respondents, which comes to 955 people. This was followed by Christians, of whom 3.9% of 17, 070 respondents said they had had therapy, which comes to 666 people.

This echoes the findings of the 2009 paper by Bartlett, Smith and King⁷, which found that only 7% of clients were reported to be primarily motivated by religious concerns. Most were motivated by intrinsic concerns, with confusion about sexual orientation at the top of the list (57%). Only 15% were motivated by 'social pressures including family'. This scuppers the claim that therapy is inherently coercive.

Whilst considering the government's LGBT survey, let's not forget that it only had responses from people who now have an LGBT sexual identity. No effort was made to study past clients whose sexual attraction changed and who then went on to marry and have children. In other words, the government has deliberately ignored ex-gays and is actively discriminating against them.

LGBT activists are running scared of public opinion

It is relevant here that the evidence about public opinion on homosexuality is so mixed.

The truth is that most British people do not believe gay or lesbian people are 'born that way'. The level of belief in Britain now is the highest ever (35% according to the ILGA 2016 survey⁸), and will probably not get any higher. In 2013, the year the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act⁹ was passed, the American survey company Pew Research Center found that only 36% of British people considered homosexuality morally acceptable¹⁰.

This year social scientists at Manchester University admitted that Britain may have reached 'peak LGBT acceptance'¹¹. They based this on the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles¹², which is the largest random sample survey on attitudes to sexual behaviour that Britain has.

Will therapy be banned as hate speech?

In light of this less than flattering picture, the only way in which the LGBT movement can continue its campaign to normalise homosexuality is to shut down the evidence provided by the ex-gay movement and to enforce hate speech laws ever more stringently to this end. It is no accident that the government has also just made an announcement setting out its intention to publish a revised Hate Crime Action Plan¹³ later this year. That way we can be sure the police will patrol twitter ever more stringently to detect any sign of support for 'conversion therapies', which activists undoubtedly want to be considered hate speech and non-violent extremism.

Censoring people's ability to speak freely about homosexuality will mean that more people will be unable to get help to leave the gay lifestyle. This is particularly a problem for men for various reasons. Censorship will also make it far more difficult for vulnerable young people to resist being drawn in.

There is no such thing as a right to sexual partners, yet it is the hidden belief in this that is driving the global campaign to ban therapy. For it is really giving out the message that ex-gays should not exist, and that therapists should not facilitate clients' personal goals of leaving homosexuality behind. Instead people should stay gay and learn to know their place!

Reassessing the compromise set by the Wolfenden Report

In proposing a ban on therapy for unwanted same-sex attraction, the UK government has ripped up the moral compromise set by the Wolfenden Report and the Sexual Offences Act 1967¹⁴. Everything will go downhill from now on. For the fact is that Wolfenden's view on decriminalisation was predicated upon acceptance of the therapeutic treatment of male homosexuality. Therapists were in favour, but the Conservative government of the day was not, and neither was the public.

Tolerance of male homosexuality would probably never have occurred without the perspective of therapists and their role in social persuasion. Successive governments have long since thrown away any respect for moral objectivity or even compromise on this subject, in passing laws permitting same-sex parenting and 'marriage'.

In light of the proposed ban on therapy, it is time not only to defend therapy but also to reassess what has been done to society in the name of decriminalisation of male homosexual acts. For if the long-term effect has been to propose to criminalise therapy, then the train of reasoning that led to the Sexual Offences Act 1967 is completely undermined. The real losers here are ex-gays and their families. Meanwhile the government loses its integrity and diminishes its reputation worldwide.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-government-action-plan-pledges-to-improve-the-lives-of-lgbt-people--2>

² <http://www.christianconcern.com/press-release/government-says-must-stay-gay>

³ <http://www.voicesofthesilenced.com/>

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2016>

⁵ <https://www.c4m.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/30cases.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-lgbt-survey-summary-report>

⁷ <https://bmcpsychiatry.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-244X-9-11>

⁸ https://ilga.org/downloads/Ilga_Riwi_Attitudes_LGBTI_survey_Logo_personal_political.pdf

⁹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/30/contents>

¹⁰ <http://www.pewglobal.org/question-search/?qid=1697&cntIDs=&stdIDs=>

¹¹ <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/peak-acceptance-of-homosexuality/>

¹² <http://www.natsal.ac.uk/home.aspx>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-plans-renewed-action-to-tackle-hate-crime>

¹⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/60/contents>