

## Response ID ANON-QJ8E-1SV2-4

Submitted to Views on the 'End Conversion Therapy' petition  
Submitted on 2021-08-09 09:51:52

### About you

1 Please read the privacy notice below and tick the box below to show that you understand how the data you provide will be used as set out in the policy.

I have read and understood how the personal data I provide will be used.

2 How your response will be published

I would like my response to be published in its entirety

3 What is your name?

Name:  
Stephen Allison

4 What is your email address?

Email:  
stephen.allison@freechurch.org

5 Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

Organisation :  
The Free Church of Scotland

### Your views on the petition

1 What are your views on the action called for in the petition?

Please provide your response in the box provided.:

The Free Church of Scotland is glad to have this opportunity to respond to the call for views on the "End Conversion Therapy" petition. "Conversion therapy" is a wide umbrella term used by LGBT+ campaigners but it is not clearly defined. This makes it difficult for us to offer our views on the action called for in the petition as it is not currently clear what practices would be banned.

As Christians we believe that all people are made in the image of God with inherent dignity and worth. We recognise that there are some practices conducted by pseudo-medical practitioners and some sham preachers that are harmful to those struggling with issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. However, we believe these extreme practices are already illegal under existing laws.

Our major concern is what other practices might be inadvertently criminalised in the process of "ending conversion therapy".

Is it the intention to stop people criticising someone's lifestyle or theology? How will this limit freedom of expression?

Would it prevent consensual counselling to support someone who is wrestling with their own identity? Surely, if this is prevented it locks medical professionals into an affirmation only approach which might not be appropriate in all circumstances.

Would the law result in a ban on what Christians and other religious leaders are able to teach in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity? Would conversations on such matters within a religious community become off limits? Could prayer be considered "conversion therapy"? How will this interfere with freedom of religion and belief?

Would a parent who complains their child has been damaged by gender ideology at school be accused of suppressing their child's true gender identity?

Would a feminist who told a gender confused girl to embrace being female be criminalised?

How would ending "conversion therapy" deal with the increasing numbers of de-transitioners who have come to regret their change in gender? Would they be offered no support for fear of engaging in "conversion therapy"? Is gender and sexuality fluid or fixed? If sexuality is fluid, why are people being applauded for moving in one direction but potentially criminalised for helping others who want to move in the other?

As Christians we believe that people deserve respect and dignity. This respect includes the ability to change one's mind. A ban on "conversion therapy" has the potential to trap people in a decision made in the past from which they can never depart.

Given these questions remain unanswered we have serious concerns about the action called for in the petition. Good law should be clear and transparent – we are not clear what a blanket ban on “conversion therapy” would cover and so would be opposed to such action.

2 What action would you like to see the Scottish Government take, within the powers available to it?

Please provide the reasons for your answer in this text box. :

The Government should consult widely with a whole range of stakeholders on this issue rather than only listening to LGBT+ campaigning organisations who have been particularly vocal on these issues.

The Government should also seek to bring clarity on what is actually covered by “conversion therapy”.

The Government should also commission its own independent research on how widespread an issue this really is. The existing research has been self-selecting and is not rigorous enough to allow us to draw clear conclusions.

3 Do you have suggestions on how the Committee can take forward its consideration of the petition?

Please enter your response in the text box provided. :

The Committee should speak with all faith communities who may be affected by a ban on “conversion therapy”.

They should also seek the views of gender-critical activists and feminist groups.

It would also be crucial to speak with medical practitioners and counsellors who work in areas that will be affected by a ban on “conversion therapy”.

It is also essential that the committee seeks the views of those who have detransitioned – although appropriate safeguards will need to be put in place to protect their identities as detransitioners are often subject to horrendous abuse.

The Committee must also commission its own independent research on how widespread an issue this really is. The existing research has been self-selecting and is not rigorous enough to allow us to draw clear conclusions.

## Evaluation

1 Was this views submission tool easy to use?

Extremely easy to use

Why did you feel it was, or was not, easy to use?:

2 Do you think this Call for Views submission tool provides a good way for you to get involved in the work of Parliament?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your answer?: