

Statement by Core Issues Trust on the “Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy”

Core Issues Trust notes the visibility in the public domain of a second political document, supported by NHS England and the leading mental health professional bodies. This “[Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy](#)”¹ follows publication of the “[Conversion Therapy Consensus Statement](#)”² in February 2014. According to [information provided by GLAAD](#)³, a meeting resulting in the Memorandum’s formulation was initiated by a Minister of State, Mr Norman Lamb in April 2014. It was attended by representatives of a range of professional, statutory and campaigning groups including Professor Michael King, from the Gay and Lesbian Special Interest Group of the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych), who provided inaccurate research information to the Church of England during the Anglican Listening Process (2007) and to the Government’s Consultation on Equal Marriage (2012). The Royal College of Psychiatrists has since adapted its statement on Sexual Orientation following complaints⁴ against its misuse of the available scientific data. The RCPsych statement⁵ now acknowledges that for some individuals change is possible and therefore recognises the fluidity of sexual patterning.

The Memorandum of Understanding (December 2014) purports to ensure *inter alia* that “The public are well informed about the evidence (of harm) and risks of conversion therapy”. In support of this intention however, the document provides no such evidence, merely citing literature reviews such as Serovich (2008) *et al* and the APA Task Force (2009) neither of which provides replicable, longitudinal, or conclusive evidence that therapeutic interventions for unwanted same-sex attractions are harmful. Once again the APA’s warning that “there is little in the way of credible evidence whether SOCE does or does not work”⁶ to substantiate such claims of effectiveness or otherwise, has been ignored. The document also cites the UKCP Consensus Statement which misleadingly appeals to the absence of ‘gold standard’ randomised controlled trials to assess talking therapies - knowing that such trials using a *placebo* to study sexual orientation change efforts (SOCEs) are both unethical and unachievable. Such trials have never been undertaken, not even to disprove the effectiveness of such interventions. According to Dr Mike Davidson, Director of Core Issues Trust:

“Once again Minister Norman Lamb has sanctioned a political initiative to bamboozle the public by vacant appeals, dead-end citations and footnotes which evidence an absence of research findings in the field of SOCEs. This is why the Memorandum continues to speak of ‘potential’ harm. Of the hundreds of modalities employed by professional counsellors and psychotherapists, why is it that only those associated with relieving unwanted same-sex attractions are being targeted?”

In foregrounding controversy about so called ‘conversion’, ‘reparative’ or ‘gay cure’ approaches, the memorandum obscures the real issue: the freedom and rights of autonomous individuals to explore, with the help of professionals, the origins of their unwanted homosexual feelings and the degree to which these feelings may be subject to change, whether these are inborn, the result of abuse or acquired through behavioural patterning.

Where are the studies and research reports that show that such interventions are harmful on average, and/or more harmful than interventions for other challenges? Here lie the double standards which discredit the government’s divide-and-rule gender policy designed to split society, the church and families to further the new faith of aggressive secularism. It is doomed to cause disaster because its premises are not based on fact or truth”

It is important to note that this Memorandum of Understanding openly acknowledges an ideological basis for those associating with it, saying “it is informed by a position that efforts to try to change or alter sexual orientation through psychological therapies are unethical and potentially harmful”. In its failure both to cite conclusive peer-reviewed scientific evidence to support these claims, and without admitting dissenting voices to debate contested areas, the Memorandum of Understanding remains a political statement uncritically promoting gay ideology.

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¹Memorandum of Understanding http://www.pinktherapy.com/Portals/0/CourseResources/Conversion_Therapy_MoU.pdf<17 December 2014>

²Consensus Statement, Updated June 2014 http://www.ukcp.org.uk/UKCP_Documents/policy/Conversion%20therapy.pdf<17 December 2014>

³Gay and Lesbian Doctor and Dentists <http://www.gladd.co.uk/index.php/media-centre/52-gay-conversion-therapy><17 December 2014>

⁴<http://www.core-issues.org/uploads/Ltr%20to%20Pres%20RCPsych%20Apr2013%20final.pdf><17 December 2014>

⁵http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/PS02_2014.pdf<17 December 2014>

⁶Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation (2009)<http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/therapeutic-response.pdf> p 28