Meeting Notes for the Working Group on Banning of Conversion Practices

Session 6, Formal Meeting

Subject: Working Group on Banning of Conversion Practices

Date: 25 July 2023

Time: 14:00

[redacted], attended the meeting.

Supporting officials:

- [redacted]

Opening welcome:

Two formal apologies were noted.

Notes from the previous meeting were discussed and no amendments were suggested. Notes from June 20 were then agreed and approved. Officials advised the working group has a week to suggest any amendments before the meeting notes are published on the Welsh Government website.

The Working Group was reminded of the availability of WG welfare and support guidance package.

Updates were provided by officials on the agreed action points from the previous meeting with members thanked for their contributions.

Members were invited to contact WG officials through email should they have anything to add following the meeting.

[redacted] thanked the group for the work they had undertaken on such a complex subject.

The group asked DMSP the following questions:

1. Has the UK Government been in touch regarding the “draft bill”?
   DMSP: UK Equalities Office has been in touch; the UKG is aware of the letter sent by the Deputy Minister to the UKG in April 2023 seeking clarity.

2. Welsh representation in the process of developing a Bill: how can members of the group support the WG to encourage the UKG to share the bill proposal?
   DMSP: We hope to contact you all if/when the draft bill is shared with us, before or after scrutiny.

3. Awareness and Comms Campaign: why is WG doing an awareness campaign?
   DMSP: This is an agenda item to discuss today.

Group commented around the importance of Human Rights in Wales and working with faith communities.

Discussion on the UK Government's "Draft Bill" on Conversion Practices: Legislative Ban

- The group considered potential implications related to UK general elections in 2024/25.
- In terms of UKG parliamentary time, the group is concerned that there may not be sufficient time for a Bill to be presented/the time frame seems quite limited.
- Potential to explore competencies in Wales for policy and legislative mechanisms.
- The group discussed devolved competencies in Wales; the group encouraged WG to scrutinise the potential UK "Draft Bill" before deciding a direction to move forward.

Welsh Government officials provided an update:

- **Campaign**: Officials provided a synopsis of the Sub-Group meeting for the Awareness Campaign for Banning of Conversion Practices. Outlining the target audience and preferred direction for the Awareness Campaign. The working group are keen for momentum to continue. A public acknowledgement from the Welsh Government on the position, commitment and aims were encouraged. Potential risk were flagged: evidencing case studies of survivors within the Awareness Campaign could cause those with lived experience to be re-traumatised or traumatise those who were unaware they had been exposed to such practices. The working group was clear that additional support should be considered for survivors of conversion practices.
- **Research**: The group requested officials to investigate options to diversify evidence collection and interviews for the research project, to minimise potential risks of trauma or retriggering LGBTQ+ Individuals. Officials advised that the research team are looking into options to diversify methods: looking at a variety of platforms and tools, and best practice to share views.
- Officials advised that the research team highlighted their experience in delivering research linked to challenging topics for survivors, including Anti-Racism; and were extremely mindful of the paramount importance of maintaining wellbeing of participants and our researchers in this study.
- Officials advised the researchers are keen to provide ethical research and create a pathway to mental health provision should any participant require. There are key processes in place for researchers to identify risks and those process will be adhered to.
- Education officials are currently working on the Trans Guidance for Schools, due for consultation late 2023 / early 2024.

Research project for Banning of Conversion Practices in Wales:

Officials acknowledged and thanked the working group for expertise, advice and commitment in supporting Welsh Government PfG, to the Banning of Conversion Practices, here in Wales. Their significant concerns, flagged by some members of the Working Group, have been noted and raised and officials have advised the working group they recently met with the researchers from the Equality Team to discuss the working groups' feedback.

Areas of concern raised by working group:

Potential risk raised: previous research projects have been high jacked by groups opposing the ban (e.g., the impact of this on transgender and non-binary communities has been damaging). Some members advised they did not feel confident supporting proposals for a research project at this stage.

Other members commented that research should go ahead to capture a diversity of voices across Wales, including minority ethnic groups, and shouldn't be opposed for this reason, and they highlighted there is little data in relation to Wales and Welsh LGBTQ+ individuals.

Officials advised the research project is separate from the Working Group. No names will be associated with the research project unless this is agreed between parties following involvement.

The group discussed the rational for completing research – "was this needed to promote legislation?"

WG provided an overview of the research project:

Urgency for WG is our commitment to engage with a diverse range of LGBTQ+ individuals and stakeholders on this matter: including people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. It was noted that some communities asked for this alternative form to deliver evidence, instead of engaging with the Working Group platform.

Creating diverse methods of engagement to support Individuals to contribute and keep their anonymity, enhancing wider diversity and inclusion is a commitment for WG.

An update on the Awareness Campaign was provided:

The campaign structure.

- The main focus of the campaign will be to promote the Welsh Governments position on Banning Conversion Practices, and what they aim to achieve.
- Case studies only from Activists and Advocates.
- Signposting to a landing page where people can find resources, including educational resources, and a range of support services in Wales: Live Fear Free, Galop, Victim Support, Fighting with Pride, Hate Hurts Wales.

Officials reassured the working group on the importance of their input to this work. Risks associated with this policy area were discussed.

Officials made it clear to the working group the policy and position of WG is to commit to banning these practices in Wales, in support of LGBTQ+ communities.

Clarification was requested by the working group on the mechanisms for feedback at the end of August, as the groups acknowledged this is the final meeting. WG Officials informed the working group, some members had volunteered to continue to support WG until the Campaign was ready to be published.

Sub-group discussed objectives for campaign:

- Position of the Welsh Government: (e.g.,) “these practices are happening in Wales and are unacceptable”, “what WG is doing” and “what WG aims to achieve”.
- Provide additional information on support in Wales.

Draft Definition:

A short discussion was held on the draft definition with the working group. It was agreed for publication on the website.

Pathways of Policy Mechanisms:

Addressing expansion of support services for survivors in Wales. What do effective support services look like?

No clear timeline: officials acknowledged to the working group that they will consider expansion of support services in Wales this over the next few months.

AOB: Welsh Government would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their commitment to the Working Group on the Banning of Conversion Practices.

Actions:

1. WG to provide update on Research Project;
2. WG to provide update on Support Services for Survivors in Wales.