Meeting Notes for the Working Group on Banning of Conversion Practice

Session 5, Formal Meeting

Subject: Working Group on Banning of Conversion Practices

Date: 20 June 2023

Time: 14:00

[redacted]

Supporting officials:

- [redacted]

Opening and Welcoming the Working Group for Banning of Conversion Practices:

Two formal apologies were noted.

The group discussed the notes from the previous meeting, and two amendments were suggested. Notes were then agreed and approved. Officials informed the working group that they have a week to make any further amendments, before the meeting notes would be published on the Welsh Government website.

The Working Group was reminded of the availability of Welsh Government's 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, including revisions of the "draft definition". The draft definition is now agreed.

Members confirmed that they had received a link to the following:

- Banning of Conversion Practices webpage;
- [redacted] Written Statement for Pride Month; and
- the LGBTQ+ Action Plan Tracker, a progress update webpage.

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

Welsh Government officials provided and update on:

- Awareness Campaign- and a synopsis of the relevant Sub-Group meeting;
- Group of researchers to join the meeting to hear how engaging with communities and survivors of conversion practices would be implemented.

UK Governments "Draft Bill" for Banning of Conversion Practices:

- The group discussed the DMSP's letter to UK Government regarding potential concerns with the UK Government "Draft Bill" for Banning of Conversion Practices. UK Government is ready to send an update soon regarding the "Draft Bill". They will issue a response once they have further updates. Welsh Governments officials will ask [redacted] to share the response, or a summary of the response.

- The chair indicated once a UK Government letter has been received, and he will send confirmation to the Working Group updating them with a brief summary.
- Chair updated members that a meeting was held with UK Government on the "Draft Bill".
- The group considered potential implications related to UK general elections in 2024/25.
- In terms of UK Government parliamentary time, the group is concerned that there may not be sufficient time. Time frame seems quite limited – the group flagged potential risk of Draft Bill being "watered down".
- Potential to explore competencies in Wales for policy and legislative mechanisms.

Working Group discussed the following:

- Members thanked the Chair and Official for the update, and they confirmed that they found this beneficial.
- A question was posed from the members: "what direction or pathway would Welsh Government explore? A distinct Welsh pathway for Welsh individuals?"
- The group asked about Human Rights implications.
- Considerations concerning devolved powers.

Research project for Banning of Conversion Practices in Wales:

Researchers were introduced. Researchers acknowledged they have a thorough understanding of literature and evidence available concerning Conversion Practices, but limited understanding of lived experience of Conversion Practices in Wales. They also acknowledged they had delivered research linked to ethnic minority groups.

Researchers provided the group with a key indication that they have experience of working with complex vulnerable people in very sensitive and potentially traumatic subject areas.

On 28 February, the Working Group discussed the "option of engaging in different formats" with community groups from a diverse range of backgrounds who could not join the Working Group itself, including diversity of protected characteristics (e.g., race; faith). This was discussed to increase engagement, if necessary, as the work of the group progresses: a research project was deemed useful to offer anonymous opportunities to submit evidence, advice, and comments, as well as a range of platforms (e.g., surveys; interviews). This was agreed as a good way forward.

The group requested officials to look into options to diversify evidence collection and interviews, to minimise risks for survivors.

Overview of research project:

Developing an inclusive platform for survivors of conversion participation and people with lived experience to have their voice heard in Wales using a diverse range of options (e.g., survey; anonymous submission; interviews) – survivors would shape the structure of the research and have the overall majority vote in decision making.

Potential to use a variety of methods: e.g., surveys, phone calls, email, meetings, whichever the initial engagement method, there is room to adapt and improve methodology.

The researchers' approach is to make sure that the project would not actively pursue survivors; survivors would engage via dedicated routes or available options.

Group raised potential concerns of researchers not having lived experience of Conversion Practices, and, if not carefully considered in terms of methodology and data collection, the potential impact this could have on participants.

Questions raised by the Working Group:

- To seek clarity on the age range for survivors of conversion practices participation in the research.
- To seek clarity about potential concerns raised and the challenges faced by researchers engaging with participants who are Welsh Language speakers.
- To seek clarity on support available for participants.
- Time scale for the research project.
- To seek clarity on diversity of methods for data collection.

Initial responses provided by the Research Members :

- 18+ years old: all participants must have reached their 18th birthday.
- Researchers stated safeguarding and risk protection processes are in place.
- Researchers advised that budget has been allocated for translation, including hiring translation experts. Welsh language is an important part of Welsh culture and the Welsh culture is an important part of inclusion within this research.
- Researchers advise a number of strategies have been identified to support participants, such as: diverse methods of engagement (e.g., survey, online, interview, anonymous submissions); safe environment; distress protocol; training provided on how to use debriefing notice; record only if consent is provided; remove any material from the report they don't want included; anonymity.
- Offer support for mental health if/when required.
- Processes in place for the researchers to contact their manager and emergency services if required, following their at-risk procedure or safeguarding procedure.
- Researchers advised the have worked with Welsh Government before: e.g., ethnic minority groups and on topics that are highly sensitive.

Potential risk and cause for concern raised by working group:

- Two group members acknowledged they did not feel fully confident with a research project at this stage.
- Highlighted that this is a separate project from the Working Group activities and no names will be associated with the research project, unless people feel confident and comfortable.
- It was highlighted that researchers and officials will work together to achieve clarity on the areas flagged by the working group.

Why is research necessary?

There have been several comments made throughout the timeline of the working group, that there is a lack of evidenced based research in this area (BoCP), especially in Wales, and to look at options for gathering evidence which would provide crucial advice for the outcomes we want to achieve in Wales. Stakeholders also requested an alternative way to gather evidence that was not linked to the Working Group, e.g., through a research project, surveys, or evidence gathering exercises. This approach is

particularly necessary to engage with some minority ethnic groups and some faith groups, who have flagged the need for alternative platforms to share their views, including anonymous channels, to provide the Minister and officials with evidence and advice.

The commitments made in April 2022 included:

1. A commitment by the [redacted] for an awareness campaign concerning Conversion Practices and on a research project in Wales.
2. To identify, improve, or expand support services in Wales and resources to promote.
3. Experiences of conversion practices in Wales and the theory of change behind potential policy or legislative mechanisms or advice.
4. To establish a Working Group of experts (Jan-July 2023).
5. Overarching potential policy or legislative options for a Wales-wide Ban of Conversion Practices.

AOB: NA.

Actions

1. WG to look at potential risks for participants and work with the researchers to ensure support and welfare package for participants is adequate, as well a diverse range of methods for data collection.
2. WG to arrange meetings to discuss an awareness campaign on Conversion Practices in Wales and Support Services – with Sub-group.
3. WG to update the working group on the response to the letter from the [redacted].
4. WG to provide update on Research Project.
5. Check with education officials: how to ascertain and to monitor a consistent approach throughout the implementation of the “Trans Guidance for Schools”. Engage with stakeholders to discuss options on how to best capture children and young people’s engagement.
6. Welsh Government would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their commitment to the Working Group on the Banning of Conversion Practices.