Meeting Notes for Working Group on Banning Conversion Practices

Session 3, Formal Meeting

Subject: Working Group on Banning of Conversion Practices

Date: 28 March 2023

Time: 14:00

Chair: [redacted]

Supporting officials:

- [redacted]

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

Two formal apologies noted.

Notes from the previous meeting were agreed with one correction noted.

The group was reminded of the availability of Welsh Governments welfare and support guidance package.

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

Welsh Government provided updates on actions agreed in the previous meeting, including revisions of the draft definition to integrate members comments and views. The amended version of the definition has been re-circulated to members.

Members agreed that they had received a link to the Banning of Conversion Practices webpage. Welsh Government stated that there had been updates to the webpage following agreed actions.

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

Welsh Government Update: research project on “Experiences of Conversion Practices in Wales”.

- All members agreed that they had received an email regarding a tendering opportunity on a research project on the banning of conversion practices.

Draft proposal for an awareness campaign on Conversion Practices and Support Services.

- A presentation was given to the group on a draft proposal for an awareness campaign in Wales on Conversion Practices and Support Services.
- Members were asked to consider sections 1 – 10 within their discussion.

Group Members discussed the following:

A clear consensus: a need for alignment between the messaging and target audiences of the awareness campaign to maintain a targeted and direct approach.

- The creation of the draft proposal is positively received by the group, they acknowledged this can also progress as the proposal develops.
- There is an increase in public awareness of conversion practices, or conversion therapy, the campaign will need to provide guidance on what constitutes conversion therapy, how and where to report and how to access support for survivors. Along with a whistleblowing policy or mechanism to capture reporting was echoed throughout the group.
- Developing an awareness within the public sector professionals who have a role that interacts with potential victims was echoed. This awareness will need to encompass how to recognise the signs and signposting to appropriate support services. The group specified this as a top priority.
- Concerns around professionals believing they have had all the information required due to the top-level campaign, the campaign needs to provide signposting to specialist training and resources available to its workforce.
- Careful consideration of the campaign framework is fundamental to reduce the risk of triggering survivors.
- The aspiration for a training programme that ensures the public sector are aware, equipped, and able to prevent further trauma. Training to generate targeted and useful educational materials and how to initiate conversations without causing further trauma.
- Timing of the campaign is crucial; the group would like to avoid conflation to minimise potential prejudice or victimisation.
- Concerns how this campaign will run at an operational level, the impact on frontline staff – guidance for frontline staff before the campaign launched is integral.
- A necessity to have advocates and support services to interact and support a wide range of victims and survivors, including those who are high-risk.
- Individuals, particularly those who have experienced religious conversion therapy, often believe others will not understand their background. As such in-sector individuals are desirable, to speak the survivors' language and understand their landscape.
- Identified a need to provide a clear and cohesive approach to safeguarding, that caters to the needs of all groups.

Draft definition of Conversion Practices: Note on Religious and Spiritual Beliefs:

Welsh Government state that following the previous meeting of the group, several comments have been integrated into the draft definition to be inclusive of members views and suggestions.

Discussion – Inclusion of a note on religious and spiritual beliefs within the draft definition:

- If a section on religious and spiritual beliefs is to be included, then it would need to be clarified what constitutes conversion therapy within this context to avoid confusion.
- This would need to be addressed in a careful manner and framed within the context of Welsh Governments policy ambitions.
- The potential for a section on the home or family settings to be included within the draft definition document was brought to the discussion. There is often a misunderstanding of what conversion therapy and practices could look like within this context.
- Group consensus, a need for clarity on the context where the “Definition of Conversion Practices” would be use within.

Training for Public Sector: awareness, resources, and policies on whistleblowing.

Discussion – Main points raised:

- Importance of adequate training for public sectors officials was echoed throughout the group, including the creation of targeted resources.
- A need to remove pre-conceptions in the public sector by dispelling misconceptions of conversion therapy through generating awareness by means of training and resources.
- The importance of health professionals being aware of conversion therapy and how to identify signs of these practices to support and signpost potential survivors.
- To create an understanding of the expectations that Welsh Governments has on professionals due to receiving training. Clarity on training being mandatory and the legalities.
- Concerns raised about the possibility of an e-learning module being used for the training, as it’s challenging to assess the level of understanding following completion. (E-learning is not the preferred option, various training styles would demonstrate a more inclusive approach for learners).

AOB:

Actions

1. WG to explore options for an awareness campaign and training programme.
2. WG to arrange a meeting to discuss an awareness campaign on Conversion Practices and Support Services.
3. WG to arrange a meeting to discuss the potential for a training programme on Conversion Therapy.
4. WG to present two different business cases to the group in the future with a preliminary assessment of risk as well as the pros and cons of each:
    1. A definition, note on affirmative care, note on religious and spiritual belief, and a note on the home/familial settings.

2. The definition and a note on affirmative care with context on where Welsh Government intend to use this.

5. Next meeting, 25 April (Cancelled) moved to 23rd May. Topic of next meeting: advising on potential additional actions to ban conversion practices. A **pathway** of policy mechanisms for banning conversion practices in Wales.