

**Public Board of Directors**  
**Item number: 05**  
**Date: 30 July 2025**

<b>Confidential/public paper:</b>	Public
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Conversion ‘Therapy’ Statement for Publication</b>
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<b>Accountable Director:</b>	Caroline Parry, Executive director of people
<b>Presented by:</b>	Liz Johnson, Head of equality and inclusion
<b>Vision and values:</b>	<p>This paper is relevant to the following organisation our vision is to improve the mental, physical and social wellbeing of the people in our communities</p> <p>Values:</p> <p><b>We keep on Improving</b> – in recognising the evidence base for the impact on mental health and inclusion of lack of validation of a person’s sexual orientation and or gender identity.</p> <p><b>We are Inclusive</b> – in recognising the relevance of our service user’s sexual orientation and or gender identity to of their fundamental health and wellbeing and their confidence in using our services.</p> <p><b>We Work together</b> – This statement has been produced by the Rainbow Staff Network group advocating for our service users and staff and in response to specific and anecdotal feedback from service users and staff.</p>
<b>Purpose:</b>	To present a statement produced by the Rainbow Staff Network Group on the organisations position on ‘Conversion Practice’ to the Board with the aim of the Board being aware of and ratifying the statement and supporting its publication internally and externally.
<b>Executive summary:</b>	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>‘Conversion therapy’ is a term used to describe any intervention or practice, which seeks to change or suppress a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. The consensus amongst medical and mental health professionals is that conversion therapy is not ethical, safe, or effective therapeutic practice.</p> <p>Conversion therapy practices include physical deprivation, electroconvulsive therapy, aversion therapy (e.g. inducing nausea), corrective rape, exorcism, and one-directional talking therapies.</p> <p>Conversion therapy is not to be confused with affirmative therapy. Affirmative therapy provides acceptance and support for a person’s exploration of their identity, whereas conversion therapy presumes a predetermined outcome i.e. – the need for a ‘cure’.</p> <p>In 2017 a large government survey of LGBTQ+ people took place<sup>1</sup>, with 108,100 valid responses received from individuals aged 16, 5% of respondents had been offered so called ‘conversion’ or ‘reparative’ therapy (but did not take it up) and a further 2% had undergone it. Of those who had</p>

<sup>1</sup> <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b3cb6b6ed915d39fd5f14df/GEO-LGBT-Survey-Report.pdf>

undergone this 19% said this was from a healthcare provider or medical professional, other sources were faith organisations or groups, community groups, parent, guardian or other family member.

In the last few years staff have reported service users expressing fear (verbally) of being subject to conversion practice in our organisation and in one case a service user has written a detailed letter about this.

The July 2024 King's Speech included an announcement that a Draft Conversion Practices Bill would be tabled to ban practices aimed at changing or suppressing someone's gender identity or sexual orientation in England and Wales. It was also highlighted that the bill would not stop professionals offering support to those exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity, or those providing medical care and support.

In July 2024 the British association for counselling and psychotherapy (BACP) published a memorandum of understanding on conversion therapy<sup>2</sup>

In response to concerns from service users and some negative news stories about this area, the organisations Rainbow Staff Network Group (RSNG) have worked with the communications team and the RSNG membership to develop a clear statement and information on our organisations position with regard to conversion therapy and a plan to ensure, that it is clearly publicised, and that negative practices do not take place in our organisation.

**Statement (the introductory text to support this is in appendix A)**

This statement is for anyone who uses our services, works in our services or who may need to use our services now or in the future.

At Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust we actively stand against any such practices, and these practices do not take place in our organisation.

We are clear that a person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity should never be considered a 'disorder' or mental health 'problem'.

We will:

- Stand in solidarity with LGBTQ+ people and support a ban on 'conversion therapy' in the UK,
- Respect the identities of those people with diverse gender and/or sexuality identities and expressions,
- Ensure that we are a safe place for people with diverse sexuality and/or gender identities and expressions to work and receive services and support.
- Offer any individuals with lived experience of 'conversion therapy' a safe environment to explore this and consider this in our assessments to ensure individuals are holistically supported by our services and referred to third sector support where appropriate.
- Acknowledge that all LGBTQ+ questioning individuals should be able to access appropriate, affirming and healthy therapy or counselling support to explore their emotions and identity. Anyone accessing therapy should do so without threat or fear of being told they should change a fundamental part of themselves.
- Raise awareness and provide education about the harm caused by so-called 'conversion therapy' practices.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bacp.co.uk/events-and-resources/ethics-and-standards/mou/>

	<p>The Rainbow SNG have also agreed a publication and communication plan to ensure that the statement is clear, supported by additional information to ensure it is accessible to service users and potential service users. This is set out in Appendix A.</p> <p><b>Appendix:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appendix A – Statement and information for publication internally and externally and communication plan.</li> </ul>
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Which strategic objective does the item primarily contribute to:					
Effective Use of Resources	Yes		No	X	
Deliver Outstanding Care	Yes	X	No		
Great Place to Work	Yes	X	No		
Reduce inequalities	Yes	X	No		

What is the contribution to the delivery of standards, legal obligations and/or wider system and partnership working.	
<p>The Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires the organisation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevent Discrimination</li> <li>Advance Equal Opportunity, and</li> <li>Foster Good relations</li> </ul> <p>When carrying out its functions – this statement supports, and is evidence of, meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty.</p> <p>The July 2024 King’s Speech included an announcement that a Draft Conversion Practices Bill would be tabled to ban practices aimed at changing or suppressing someone's gender identity or sexual orientation in England and Wales.</p>	
<b>Board assurance framework (BAF) and corporate risk(s):</b>	There are currently no risks associated with this item:
<b>Any background papers/items previously considered:</b>	N/A
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<p>The Board are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the statement and <b>approve</b> this for publication through the website and the Intranet alongside the information outlined in Appendix A and in line with the communication plan highlighted in Appendix A.</li> </ul>

## **Appendix A**

### **Conversion therapy statement**

#### **1. Following text to appear in statements section on website:**

##### **Our statement on conversion practices/interventions (often described as ‘conversion therapy’) and LGBTQ+ people.**

This statement is for anyone who uses our services, works in our services or who may need to use our services now or in the future.

At Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust we actively stand against any such practices and these practices do not take place in our organisation.

We are clear that a person’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity should never be considered a ‘disorder’ or mental health ‘problem’.

We will:

- Stand in solidarity with LGBTQ+ people and support a ban on ‘conversion therapy’ in the UK,
- Respect the identities of those people with diverse gender and/or sexuality identities and expressions,
- Ensure that we are a safe place for people with diverse sexuality and/or gender identities and expressions to work and receive services and support.
- Offer any individuals with lived experience of ‘conversion therapy’ a safe environment to explore this and consider this in our assessments to ensure individuals are holistically supported by our services and referred to third sector support where appropriate.
- Acknowledge that all LGBTQ+ questioning individuals should be able to access appropriate, affirming and healthy therapy or counselling support to explore their emotions and identity. Anyone accessing therapy should do so without threat or fear of being told they should change a fundamental part of themselves.
- Raise awareness and provide education about the harm caused by so-called ‘conversion therapy’ practices.

#### **2. Expandable box labelled ‘what is conversion therapy?’ with following info in it:**

‘Conversion therapy’ is a term used to describe any intervention or practice, which seeks to change or suppress a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

The consensus amongst medical and mental health professionals is that conversion therapy is not ethical, safe, or effective therapeutic practice. This is because:

- The term 'therapy', derived from the Greek, denotes 'healing'. Practices of conversion therapy are however the contrary, relying on the medically false pathologization of sexual orientation and gender identity, manifested through interventions that inflict severe pain and suffering and result in psychological and/or physical damage.
- Conversion therapy practices include physical deprivation, electroconvulsive therapy, aversion therapy (e.g. inducing nausea), corrective rape, exorcism, and one-directional talking therapies.
- Conversion therapy must not be confused with affirmative therapy. Affirmative therapy provides acceptance and support for a person's exploration of their identity, whereas conversion therapy presumes a predetermined outcome i.e. – the need for a 'cure'.
- Health-care professionals are compelled by the 'do no harm' principle not to offer treatments that are recognised as ineffective or that claim to achieve unattainable results. The Independent Forensic Expert Group of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims - a group of preeminent international medico-legal specialists from 23 countries - has declared that "offering conversion therapy is a form of deception, false advertising and fraud." (U.N. Madrigal-Borloz, Victor; May 2020)<sup>1</sup>
- The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic law and imposes a duty on public sector agencies (such as the NHS) to protect, respect and fulfil human rights. Article 3 of the ECHR states that no one shall be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment. Conversion therapy practices could amount to inhuman or degrading treatment. Article 3 is an absolute right, meaning that it cannot be lawfully limited or restricted for any justification, including justifications of freedom of thought, conscience and religion or freedom of expression. The aforementioned public sector duty also means that should public officials discover conversion practices that could amount to an Article 3 breach, they are compelled by law to intervene to protect individuals, where they see real and immediate risk of such harm, and there are actions in the scope of their powers to protect individuals against such harms.

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<sup>1</sup> [Human Rights Council. Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#)

**3. Expandable box labelled ‘further information and support with following text in it:**

If you have been impacted by ‘conversion therapy’ and are in need of support, more information and advice can be found here:

- Conversion therapy – Galop The Galop helpline is for LGBT+ people experiencing abuse or violence, such as hate crime, domestic abuse, sexual violence, so-called ‘conversion therapy’ or any other kind of abuse. 0800 999 5428 (free to phone) Monday – Thursday, 10am to 8:30pm and Friday, 10am to 4:30pm. Or you can email: [help@galop.org.uk](mailto:help@galop.org.uk)

If you would like more information on the position of the medical and mental health profession with regard to ‘conversion therapy’, you can find more information here:

- [Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK](#)
- [British Medical Association](#)
- [The Lancet – ‘When Therapy is Not Therapy’](#)

If you would like to know more about these practices and the harm they cause, more information can be found here:

- [Everything you need to know about conversion therapy | Stonewall](#)
- The United Nations: [Practices of so-called ‘conversion therapy’ : report of the Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#)

**4. We will also do a covering news item on the website to demonstrate our commitment that we don’t tolerate conversion therapy.**