

The Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

End Conversion Therapy/Practices Virtual Engagement Session in private with the Committee and Individuals with lived experiences

26 October 2021

Participant – O

Committee Member – Maggie Chapman

The participant felt that it was really important to have this conversation. The participant is a volunteer with Hidayah which supports LGBTQI + Muslims.

The participant wants to help stop other young people from going through this.

The participant said, as a Muslim, they never felt comfortable with their sexuality.

The participant said that Conversion Therapy/Practices manifest in different ways, Electric Shock, Counselling, Faith Based and Torture.

The participant said that at the age of 14, Faith Leaders told them to fast, stop eating for a stretch of time, 30 days. The participant said that they were then made to fast again for another 30 day and at the age of 14, this was very hard and had a detrimental impact on their physical and mental health. The participant said that this made no difference to them. The participant said that this made them an angry person. This was not working for them. They stepped back from this person and became involved in gangs and got into trouble with the Police.

The participant said that another Faith Leader told them to get married. Married to hide their sexuality.

The participant talked about Mecca, Pilgrimage for Muslims, this was a very positive experience. The participant said that their sexuality was accepted.

The participant said that some of the members they support at Hidayah were sent to Witch Doctors, forced into Marriages.

The participant talked about a particular organisation that is still practicing Conversion Therapy in the UK. <https://www.strongsupport.co.uk>

Committee Member, Maggie Chapman MSP asked the participant ‘*What could the Committee do to support*’?

The participant said that the attitude of family is the biggest problem. LGBTQI+, there is no interaction/education.

The participant said that education is an important factor for the members that Hidayah supports. LGBTQI+ Education does not happen at home. Some

Headteachers are not always happy to do this education at school, it is lumped in with other subjects.

Committee Member asked the participant if Hidayah is an organisation only in Scotland?

The participant said that Hidayah was an entirely volunteer led organisation, They volunteer during their lunch breaks and weekends. The participant said that the charity is UK based, prior to this, they were grassroots, no funding and not paid staff. The participant said that the reality is that we support people. They helped a young person run away from home. The young person did not want to involve the Police and did not want to bring shame. There is honour based violence which stops many Queer Muslims from coming out.

Committee Member, Maggie Chapman asked the participant if they would have benefited from any other support?

The participant responded by saying, unfortunately, there is lack of Queer support. The participant said that Hidayah has been like an Adopted family, provide that safe place, support network of who you are and your faith.

Committee Member, Maggie Chapman asked, “How we frame the Ban?”

The participant said that there should be more talk about intersectionality. The participant said their own identity – racial and sexual minority growing up in Scotland was very difficult.

Muslim – Break down these micro aggressions. People distanced themselves against the Muslim Queer community.

Committee Member, Maggie Chapman asked “Are there other communities we should be engaging with?”

The participant said that it is important to recognise all the characters.

- Trans
- Intersex
- Asylum seekers/Refugees
- People experiencing mental health
- There is still lots of work to do, health disparities,
- Farming Community – Farmers would not support the marginalised rural communities
- Covid has had its positive impact, - Hidayah virtual online, being able to reach out to people in Saudi Arabia, being online has had its positives.

Committee Member, Maggie Chapman said that they are keen that we get this right relating to the Ban. Support, funding, engaging across the faith community

Any measures to be in place for Survivors?

The participant said mental health – Lived experiences of people in own community. More Muslim LGBTQI+ counsellors in the UK. The participant said that they need to understand cultural barriers, send the appropriate person to help.