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PRESS RELEASE

Gay Health Network (GHN) calls on the Irish Government to urgently enact legislation to prohibit Conversion Therapy.

We are gravely concerned at the stalling of progress on this matter, and at the continued delay by Government on the enactment of the legislation, on the basis that research is needed. There remains no clear deadline for the completion of such research. **In the meantime, Conversion Therapy practices continue to cause damage to individuals.**

Conversion therapy is the practice of trying to change an individual's sexual orientation from homosexual or bisexual (or other) to heterosexual or their gender identity from transgender or non-binary to cisgender, using psychological, physical, or spiritual interventions. Such practices are widely proscribed by Western Psychological and Psychiatric Professional bodies. There have been numerous studies highlighting the psychological harm that conversion therapy does to Gay, Lesbian, Bi and Trans people.

These practices may be overt, covert, subtle or obvious. Modern forms of conversion therapy appear to largely take the form of talking therapies and spiritual interventions.

As noted by Bill Foley, Secretary of Gay Health Network speaking at the Network's AGM, "We believe that secular mental health professionals who are treating clients in this way may be operating outside of their professional guidelines. Religious organisations offering to 'pray away' a person's sexual orientation or gender identity towards more heteronormative behaviours are operating outside the professional sphere completely."

'It's imperative that the government enact legislation without further delay as demanded by all member organisations of GHN'.

WHO ARE WE

Founded in 1994, GHN is a network of organisations and individuals working at the frontline of HIV and STI service agencies. We are an expert network providing a national resource, response, and support for the promotion HIV prevention, and sexual health and wellbeing, for gay and bisexual men and men who have sex with men (gbMSM).

GHN MEMBER GROUPS 2021:

BeLonG To, Dublin LGBTQ+ Pride, Gay Men's Health Service (HSE), GOSHH Ireland, HIV Ireland, Outhouse (LGBT+ Community Centre), Positive Now, Sexual Health Centre, Sexual Health West, The Switchboard, LGBT Ireland. GHN liaises closely with LGBTI community and groups and commercial social venues, HIV/sexual health organisations and services and with national and local representatives from STI/GUM services and the HSE Public Health and Health and Wellbeing Departments.

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