

18 February, 2015

Suzanne Dodds  
**Governance and Compliance Manager**  
**Professional Standards Authority**  
57-197 Buckingham Palace Road  
London  
SW1W 9SP  
Suzanne.dodds@professionalstandards.org.uk

Dear Ms Dodds

**COMPLAINT: PRESS RELEASE 16TH JANUARY 2016 'THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AUTHORITY SUPPORTS ACTION BY ACCREDITED REGISTERS ON CONVERSION THERAPY'**

I write as the Director of an organisation which seeks to safely support individuals many of whom refuse to seek help from professional care workers who are listed on registers accredited by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA).

According to the press statement referred to above, under its 'equalities duties' the PSA now refuses to accredit any register which allows what it refers to as 'conversion' therapy. In effect the statement discriminates against any individual who chooses to reduce, with professional support, any unwanted homosexual feelings or behaviours, on the grounds that it is 'unethical' and 'potentially harmful' to do so.

**MY COMPLAINT**

I write to register a formal complaint **(1)** that by this statement **the PSA contributes to discrimination against individuals** who voluntarily seek support for aspirations to reduce homosexual feelings and/or practices and who are unwilling to identify as homosexual. It does so debarring registers supporting professionals willing to do so. Such persons are now forced to seek support informally, rather than from registered therapists. The PSA statement is in disregard of minority orientations experiencing, but rejecting identification with homosexual feelings. The PSA's discriminative action represented in this statement **(2) closes the door** to those organisations seeking a register, who do not share values denying autonomous individuals the right to explore change or try to reduce orientation using the support of registered professionals. Such action now guarantees a rise in alternative structures and registers and informal counselling initiatives which may be less safe than those administered by regulators. Such disenfranchised professionals will be denied the benefit of collegial supervision, continuing professional development and professional indemnity insurance. The PSA's statement **(3) is misleading to the public** because it fails to acknowledge the fact that what it calls 'conversion' therapy – most likely the application of standard therapeutic modalities to explore change *on a continuum* – is not illegal in the United Kingdom.

**DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MINORITIES FOR WHOM HOMOSEXUAL PRACTICE IS EGODYSTONIC**

According to the Equality Act 2010 it is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation, whether actual or perceived, and irrespective of what the original orientation was.

**Council of Reference:** Mr Andrew Comiskey (CEO Desert Stream /Living Waters), USA; Professor Robert Gagnon, (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary), USA; Rev David Johnston, (Presbyterian, NI); Andrea Minichiello Williams (CEO Christian Legal Centre) GB; Canon Chris Sugden (C of E, GB); Mr Dermot O'Callaghan (Church of Ireland, NI); Rev Hadden Wilson (Baptist, NI)

This means that those who see themselves as ‘ex-gay’, for example, should not be discriminated against – regardless of the fact that such an identity is not a protected category. I draw your attention to The Master of the Rolls’ Appellate Judgement for a further explication of this point<sup>1</sup>.

### My REQUESTS TO THE PSA

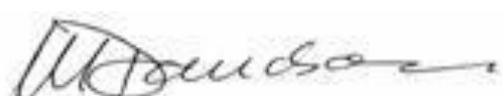
I request (1) that the PSA make explicit the specific scientific evidence and ethical grounds enabling it to endorse the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy, given that neither that document nor the January 2015 statement I am complaining about cites any meaningful scientific information indicating that such a replicable assessment has been conducted. I also request (2) that the PSA identify the legal grounds for its position statement now being used to exclude those registers supporting individual registrants who work to support the aspirations of clients with *egodystonic* or unwanted homosexuality.

I note that according to the PSA website, your values “are at the heart of who [you] are and what [you] do. [You] are committed to being impartial, fair, accessible and consistent in the application of [your] values”. I am therefore assuming that in promoting values which discriminate against work with those for whom homosexual feelings are egodystonic, you are able to identify transparently and openly a reliable, verifiable evidence-base for denying both sexual fluidity, and the reasonable support of individuals to achieve goals that may include change that is rarely categorical, but is *on the continuum*. If this is the case, I should be grateful if in responding to my complaint, you would (3) list the peer-reviewed articles you consider in support of your position and actions as reflected in your statement so that these can be examined openly.

Finally I wish to state that Core issues Trust supports the regulation of professional care workers and supports LGBTI dignity. We seek to provide responsible care for those now alienated and abandoned by professional counsellors and psychotherapists unable to practice within the ideological framework you have now imposed.

I should be grateful for your response to my complaint and requests, further detailed below.

Thank you for your attention



**Dr Michael R Davidson, PhD., FHEA**

Director

**CORE ISSUES TRUST**

Accepted as a Charity by HM Revenue and Customs (XT29880)

M: 07833098998 | L: 02897563008| W: [www.core-issues.org](http://www.core-issues.org)

Cc:

CEO of the Professional Standards Authority, [Harry.Cayton@professionalstandards.org.uk](mailto:Harry.Cayton@professionalstandards.org.uk)

Chair of the Professional Standards Authority, Baroness [Jill.Pitkeathley@professionalstandards.org.uk](mailto:Jill.Pitkeathley@professionalstandards.org.uk)

---

<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 98 CO72842012, In the Court of Appeal (Civil Division) On Appeal from the High Court, Queen’s Bench Division, Administrative Court, Before Mrs Justice Lang, Master of the Rolls, Lord Justice Briggs, And Lord Justice Christopher Clarke: <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2014/34.html>

**Council of Reference:** Mr Andrew Comiskey (CEO Desert Stream /Living Waters), USA; Professor Robert Gagnon, (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary), USA; Rev David Johnston, (Presbyterian, NI); Andrea Minichiello Williams (CEO Christian Legal Centre) GB; Canon Chris Sugden (C of E, GB); Mr Dermot O’Callaghan (Church of Ireland, NI); Rev Hadden Wilson (Baptist, NI) 2

## MY COMPLAINT AND YOUR STANDARDS

I am assuming that in entertaining concerns raised against PSA Registrants, the PSA is itself held to the standards<sup>i</sup> it has required registrants to embrace?

It would be helpful therefore if in its response, the PSA would consider the following concerns its statement of January 16<sup>th</sup> 2015 raises:

Standard engaged	Concern raised
<p><b>Standard 2:</b> the organisation demonstrates that it is committed to protecting the public and promoting public confidence in the occupation it registers.</p> <p>The organisation will need to demonstrate that its purpose and directives are focused on public protection. Additionally, the organisation will need to show that in carrying out its voluntary register functions public interest is paramount and that professional interests do not dominate or unintentionally subvert that interest.</p>	<p>Please explain:</p> <p>(1) how the PSA's position, as reflected in its January 2015 statement promotes public confidence in the occupation it registers when it publicly discriminates against those individuals seeking professional help who are egodystonic in their relationship to the homosexual feelings they experience</p> <p>(2) How the 'professional interests' of the PSA have NOT dominated or unintentionally subverted the public interest of the minority I refer to</p>
<p><b>Standard 3: Risks</b> The organisation:</p> <p>3a) Has a thorough understanding of the risks presented by their occupation(s) to service users and the public – and where appropriate, takes effective action to mitigate them.</p>	<p>Please explain the how the PSA intends to perform its 'equality duty' to those whose sexual orientation experience egodystonic homosexuality, and who are variously motivated, perhaps religiously, to reduce and where possible change homosexual practices and feelings.</p>
<p><b>Standard 5:</b> the organisation demonstrates that it has the capacity to inspire confidence in its ability to manage the register effectively.</p> <p>Factors the Professional Standards Authority will take into account include the organisation's leadership, its reputation within and outside its field, the</p>	<p>Please (1) point to the PSA guidelines of practice upon which the Regulator has relied in deciding to unreservedly support the Memorandum of Understanding and the scientific evidence brought to bear on this decision.</p> <p>As a means of inspiring confidence as a regulators, would the PSA (2) explain</p>

**Council of Reference:** Mr Andrew Comiskey (CEO Desert Stream /Living Waters), USA; Professor Robert Gagnon, (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary), USA; Rev David Johnston, (Presbyterian, NI); Andrea Minichiello Williams (CEO Christian Legal Centre) GB; Canon Chris Sugden (C of E, GB); Mr Dermot O'Callaghan (Church of Ireland, NI); Rev Hadden Wilson (Baptist, NI)

**Registered Office:** 102 Kinedale Park Ballynahinch BT248YS | **Accepted as a Charity** by HM Revenue and Customs (XT29880) | M: 07833098998 | L: 02830828320 or 02892639635 | W: [www.core-issues.org](http://www.core-issues.org)

<p>skills and experience of those involved in its voluntary register functions, its operational efficiency and its openness.</p>	<p>why the PSA's January Statement and policy position on this matter is inspired by scientific and professional criteria and not a <i>political agenda</i>.</p>
<p><b>Standard 6:</b> the organisation demonstrates that there is a defined knowledge base underpinning the health and social care occupations covered by its register or, alternatively, how it is actively developing one. The organisation makes the defined knowledge base or its development <b>explicit</b> to the public.</p> <p>The Professional Standards Authority recognises that not all disciplines are underpinned by evidence of proven therapeutic value. Some disciplines are subject to controlled randomized trials, others are based on qualitative evidence. Some rely on anecdotes. Nevertheless, these disciplines are legal and the public choose to use them. The Authority requires organisations to make the knowledge base/its development clear to the public so that they may make informed decisions.</p>	<p>The PSA appears to be relying on position statements of its registrants and bodies such as Royal College of Psychiatrists (which recently modified its incorrect statement).</p> <p>Would the PSA, a regular, please (1) make <b>explicit</b> to the public the knowledge –base it is referring to in its decision to unquestioningly support the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy. If this does not yet exist it would be helpful to know when, and by whom such a knowledgebase will be developed and how it might consider the position of those experiencing egodystonic or <i>unwanted homosexuality</i>.</p> <p>Should the PSA take the view, along with the UKCP for example that scientific evidence is unnecessary in underpinning its values and policies, would the PSA (2) clarify (<b>make the knowledge base clear</b>) for the public the fact that 'Conversion' (sic) Therapy is not illegal in the UK.</p>
<p>Standard 7: governance</p> <p>The organisation:</p> <p>7a) Ensures that the governance of its voluntary register functions is directed toward protecting the public and promoting public confidence in the occupation it registers.</p> <p>7b) Carries out its governance in accordance with good practice. It is for the organisation to determine what good practice standards it adopts as appropriate to its form and function. They should include as a minimum adherence to the following principles: Behaving with integrity (including proper</p>	<p>Please explain once again (1) how the PSA's statement inspires confidence in those individuals who perceive the PSA to not recognise the fluidity of sexuality contrary to increasingly emergent scientific data.</p> <p>Would the PSA (2) confirm that the only place 'change' in sexual feelings <u>may not happen</u> is now in the counselling rooms of any registrant aligned to registers held by the PSA.</p> <p>Please explain how this reflects scientific consistency between theory and practise or '<b>integrity</b>' identified in the PSA's values.</p>

**Council of Reference:** Mr Andrew Comiskey (CEO Desert Stream /Living Waters), USA; Professor Robert Gagnon, (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary), USA; Rev David Johnston, (Presbyterian, NI); Andrea Minichiello Williams (CEO Christian Legal Centre) GB; Canon Chris Sugden (C of E, GB); Mr Dermot O'Callaghan (Church of Ireland, NI); Rev Hadden Wilson (Baptist, NI)

<p>management of conflicts of interest)          Being open          Being accountable          Being socially responsible.</p> <p>The organisation should provide examples that illustrate these principles being put into practice.</p> <p>7c) Demonstrates that it seeks, understands and uses the views and experiences of service users and the public to inform key decisions about its voluntary register functions.</p> <p>7d) Ensures that in carrying out its voluntary register functions it is fair, effective, proportionate and transparent so that it is respected and trusted.</p>	<p>Please indicate (1) specific examples of work undertaken by the PSA or those it regulates to show how the experiences and views of individuals with unwanted same-sex feelings and behaviours are being listened to, including those who are religiously motivated to change as far as possible such behaviours and feelings as are inconsistent with their own values.</p> <p>Please explain (2) what the PSA has done to make sure its provision and standards are socially responsible with respect to including minorities who cannot support position statements which are discriminating against specific sexual orientation experiences such as 'ex-gay'.</p> <p>Finally please indicate why the PSA believes its recent January statement is fair, effective and proportionate and transparent to all who share our country, when it has failed to make its knowledge base explicit to the public.</p>
--	---

---

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/accredited-registers/about-accredited-registers/our-standards>