

The Sunday Mirror, and Sunday People have notified Core Issues Trust that they are to publish this weekend (Sunday 16 May 2021) an article intended to incriminate the Trust following the undercover activities of their reporter Joe Willis. The Trust has issued this statement:

Whether genuine or deceitful, enquirers to Core Issues Trust are encouraged to recognise that we all have an attachment template, rooted in our childhood development, that will influence how we relate to others. Psychodynamic protocols are standard and recognised as a valid counselling approach when exploring sexual attraction fluidity, as Matthew did with reporter Joe Ellis. The Trust stands by Trustee Matthew Grech's counselling approach.

Core Issues Trust works with individuals failed by the NHS, Royal College of Psychiatrists, UKCP and other signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK (MOU). The fact is, when the MOU was introduced in 2014, signatory mental health service providers, including the UKCP (United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy) and the Association of Christian Counselling UK (ACC), abandoned individuals in conflict over their sexuality, agreeing to offer gay-affirming therapies only. At the time of its negotiation, working in association with the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), then Minister of State Norman Lamb refused to consult with any dissenting group, over the matter of regulating therapeutic support in this area, including Core Issues Trust. That is why the country's mental health sector is now ruled by the sexual politics of a monolithic viewpoint that can tolerate no dissent or challenge. Core Issues Trust has stood to support these abandoned individuals, exploring sexual fluidity issues and affirming their Christian values, where these are primary.

We should note however, that the Royal College of Psychiatrists, is not signatory to the MOU (2017) which is indicative that all is not in unison. Conversion therapy for transexual individuals might be the point of difference. Whatever the reason, medics in the NHS, General Medical Council or those trained in UK universities and led by the established UK mental health bodies, conducted aversion and electroshock techniques – not the church and not ministries such as Core Issues Trust.

We can't have it both ways. If we claim harm can result from informal counselling or church-based pastoral care, we should be developing shared pastoral care and counselling standards - as Core Issues Trust through the IFTCC (International Federation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice) has done - and not forcing such initiatives to the backstreets. We should allow access to professional training and not deny access because of viewpoint differences - as happened to Director Dr Mike Davidson in 2014. We should encourage professional collegiality, not enforce isolation and ostracism. Core Issues Trust has operated with transparency since 2016, under the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland. Accusations of "torture" and "conversion therapy" made recently by MLA Doug Beatie in Stormont about the Trust and the IFTCC, have been identified by lawyers as slanderous and otherwise actionable. The Trust operates under a clear Safeguarding Policy, issued 2020¹.

The Trust notes media interest in the blame apportioned by activists such as Jayne Ozanne and the Ozanne Foundation, to those providing pastoral care to those who, like Jayne, experience identity conflicts around felt-sexuality and spirituality. We are especially grieved to read of the tragedy revealed in her book "Just Love" that she was the victim of sexual rape-abuse and wonder why this fact, clearly in the public domain, is never highlighted by those reporting on her story and blaming counsellors for her difficulties.

The Trust will continue to unapologetically uphold, respectfully promote and humbly defend Christian teaching in accordance with the words of Jesus who regularly affirmed the sacred twoness of humankind: male and female. He consistently reverted to the teachings in the Book of Genesis on marriage between one man and one woman in covenantal union. We who believe his words should do no other.

Banning therapeutic choice – the real purpose of "conversion therapy" bans - is a violation of the basic human rights of belief and association. If the government proceeds in this direction, restricting freedom of speech and funding soviet-styled witch-hunts through compensation schemes, every citizen in the Kingdom will have these basic human rights, including religious freedoms, reduced or impeded.

For further information

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Friday 14th May 2021

¹ https://www.core-issues.org/UserFiles/File///Safeguarding/Out_of_Harm_s_Way_Final_11.05.20.pdf