

# Expression of interest

# Title: Conversion Therapy among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people - Evidence Review and Qualitative Study

**Project reference: GEO2018/05**

**Deadline for expressions of interest: 19 November 2018 (by 23:59)**

## Summary

In order to inform the development of potential policy options to end the practice of conversion therapy with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in the UK, the Government Equalities Office (GEO) is seeking expressions of interest to carry out a research project to include a rapid evidence review around conversion therapy, and qualitative research involving LGBT participants who have directly experienced conversion therapies in the UK.

Please note that for the purposes of this project, we are using the acronym ‘LGBT’ in an inclusive sense, to cover all those with minority sexual orientations or gender identities

## Background

The practice of ‘conversion therapy’ (also sometimes referred to as cure, aversion or reparative therapies) is intended to **change someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity**. These techniques can take many forms and commonly range from pseudo-psychological treatments to spiritual counselling. In extreme cases, they may also include surgical and hormonal interventions, or so-called ‘corrective’ rape. While it is unclear exactly how widespread the practice is in the UK, 2% of respondents to GEO’s National LGBT Survey in 2017 said that they had undergone conversion therapy in an attempt to ‘cure’ them of being LGBT, while a further 5% said they had been offered it.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The Government is clear that conversion therapy is wrong, and as part of GEO’s LGBT Action Plan, we will be bringing forward proposals to end the practice of conversion therapy in the UK.[[2]](#footnote-2) We will fully consider all legislative and non-legislative options to prohibit promoting, offering or conducting conversion therapy. Our intent is to protect people who are vulnerable to harm or violence, whether that occurs in a medical, commercial or faith-based context. We are not trying to prevent LGBT people from seeking legitimate medical support or spiritual support from their faith leader in the exploration of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In order to inform the development of potential policy options, GEO is seeking to commission a package of research, which will include a rapid evidence review relating to the practice of conversion therapy among the LGBT population, to identify the nature and extent of current evidence, and any evidence gaps. The package will also include a qualitative element, to gather evidence from LGBT people who have directly experienced conversion therapy in the UK, and explore what happened and how, and what impact it had on their lives.

## Project aims

The project seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. **What is conversion therapy and how does it happen?**
   1. What approaches and techniques does it involve and how is it manifested?
   2. Who is offering or carrying it out, and why?
   3. How prevalent is it, and does the prevalence and form it takes vary depending on context (e.g. between members of different faiths, different types of practitioners, and different countries)?
2. **Who experiences conversion therapy and why?**
   1. How do people end up undergoing or being offered conversion therapy?
   2. Are certain demographic groups within the LGBT population more likely to be targeted, and how?
3. **What effect does conversion therapy have on people?**
   1. What harm does conversion cause among those who undergo or are offered it?
   2. What evidence exists about the effectiveness of these therapies, and how robust is it?
4. **What measures have been taken to end conversion therapy around the world, by whom, and with what effect?**

As part of this project (and particularly through the evidence review), the research should assess the strength of evidence relating to these research questions, and identity remaining gaps in the evidence.

## Methodology

A summary of the expected methodogy for this project is presented here, with further details to be provided as part of the invitation to tender. Please note that **at the expression of interest stage, we do not require bidders to set out the methodology they would use** to carry out this particular project, and any such information will not be considered as part of the assessment.

#### Evidence review

Due to the time constraints, and potential lack of robust evidence relating to conversion therapy, we recommend that the most appropriate approach would be to undertake a **rapid evidence review**. This would provide a more structured and rigorous search and quality assessment of the available evidence than a literature review, but would not be as exhaustive as a full systematic reivew.

We envision that the scope will include peer-reviewed journal articles, other peer-reviewed publications and grey literature published since the year 2000, but we would expect the contractor to include seminal pieces of research from before this, if they are referenced in more recent literature. We envisage that the scope for some of the research questions will be international, but limited to literature published in the English language, although the core focus of the review should be on conversion therapy as currently practiced in the UK. Priority should be given to systematic reviews or meta analyses, but individual quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods studies should also be included in scope. A potential lack of evidence on particular topics may mean that a lower quality threshold may be required (e.g. small-group studies, or studies using convenience samples).

#### Qualitative research

We envision that qualitative research element will involve **30-40 semi-structured face-to-face interviews** with LGBT people who have experienced conversion therapy. We would aim to achieve a range of different participants, split between LGB men and women, and trangender and non-binary people. We would also expect some stratification of participants according to different criteria, such as religion, ethnicity, who carried out the conversion therapy and whether they sought it out themselves or were encouraged to undertake by others. The focus should be on respondents who have experienced conversion therapy in the last 10 years. However, we recognise that this is likely to be a hard-to-access group, so we will be unlikely to meet strict quotas on all these criteria, and may require a more flexible approach to recruitment.

In order facilitate recruitment, the successful contractor would be expected to work closely with GEO and their stakeholders to identify potential routes to recruiting particpants. However, we would also expect the contractor to have access to their own networks of contacts and stakeholders, and develop their own recruitment strategies, to complement any joint working with GEO.

## Procurement timetable

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| EOI published | 7 November 2018 |
| EOI deadline | 19 November 2018 (by 23:59) |
| Invitation to tender circulated | 22 November 2018 |
| Invitation to tender deadline | 11 December 2018 (by 23:59) |
| Contract signed | w/c 17 December 2018 |

## Provisional project timetable

Please note that the following timetable is indicative. The key date for completion is currently 28 June 2019, by which point a final report from the evidence review and the qualitative research should be agreed and ready for publication. Bidders should set out in the capacity section of their EOI whether they are able to deliver a project of this scale in the proposed timetable.

We aim to sign a contract for this project prior to Christmas 2018, to provide the contractor with the opportunity to begin work on the evidence review prior to the New Year, should they so wish.



## Budget

We envision a maximum budget for this work within the range of £40,000-60,000. However, please note that we are not expecting any costs to be provided by bidders at the EOI stage.

## Assessment criteria

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following three criteria:

* **Relevant subject matter experience and expertise (35%)**, ideally to include the following:
  + Experience and knowledge of LGBT research, preferably with knowledge around conversion therapy in particular
  + Experience conducting research with LGBT participants
* **Methodological skills and expertise (35%)**, ideally to include expertise in the following:
  + Conducting rapid evidence reviews and systematic reviews
  + Qualitative research techniques, such as semi-structured interviewing
  + Conducting research on sensitive, and potentially distressing topics
  + Recruitment of hard-to-reach research participants
* **Capacity to deliver (30%)**
  + Necessary staff, with the right skills, in place to deliver within the required timescales
  + Capacity to draw on additional staff in the case of staff sickness etc.

| **Closing date for EOIs: 19 November 2018 (by 23:59)**  **Send your EOI form to:** [**edward.eaton@geo.gov.uk**](mailto:edward.eaton@geo.gov.uk)  **Word limit: 1,500 words** |
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## How to submit an expressions of interest

You must submit an expression of interest (EOI) in order to be considered to be invited to tender. To do so, please complete the NEW EOI Form which can be found under attachments. **The word limit for this EOI is 1,500 words,** any words beyond this limit will not be considered as part of your EOI. Similarly, links to external information or other attachments (such as CVs) will not be considered. A submission of an EOI does not guarantee an invitation to tender and GEO does not routinely advise organisations that they have not been successful in being invited to tender. Feedback is however available on request.

All contracts are let on the basis of the Department for Education’s standard research contract [terms and conditions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eoi-guide). You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.

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1. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721704/LGBT-survey-research-report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721367/GEO-LGBT-Action-Plan.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)