

EMBARGOED UNTIL 1930 ON WEDNESDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2019

## **SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS REPORTS OF SIGNIFICANT HARM EXPERIENCED BY LGBQ+ CHILDREN OF FAITH WHO ARE SUBJECT TO “CONVERSION THERAPY”**

**The 2018 National Faith & Sexuality Survey has revealed the high level of mental health issues reported amongst people who have attempted changing their sexual orientation, with many sharing they have attempted suicide or had suicidal thoughts. Over half said they first attempted to change whilst they were 18 or under with many stating they were influenced by their religious leader. 22 people said they had been forced to undergo sexual activity with someone of the opposite gender. These attempts were reported as being overwhelmingly unsuccessful, with the primary motivations given for attempting to change relating to either religious beliefs or internationalised homophobia.**

The survey, the first of its kind in the UK, was designed to understand the impact of religious belief on people’s understanding and acceptance of their sexual orientation. It ran during December 2018 and attracted over 4600 responses, of which a tenth (458) stated they had personal experience of attempting to change their sexual orientation. Over half of these said they had experienced mental health issues, of whom nearly a third (91 people) said they had attempted suicide while over two-thirds (193 people) said they had had suicidal thoughts. Two in five of those who reported mental health issues indicated they had self-harmed and a quarter said they had suffered from eating disorders. Few said they had sought advice from the medical profession but instead nearly half said they had sought advice from their religious leader, who was identified as being significantly more likely than parents to be the person to advise or force attempts at sexual orientation change.

Reflecting on the findings the Rt Revd Paul Bayes, Bishop of Liverpool and Chair of the Ozanne Foundation, which managed the project, said:

*“The level of considered and attempted suicide reported here is shocking and sobering. The statistics reflect lives which have been scarred and strained by mixed messaging of love, acceptance, condemnation and fear. My hope is that the courageous sharing of our*

*respondents will not go unheard, and that human flourishing and human life will not be treated as a mere intellectual battleground for dry conversation.”*

Project co-ordinator, Jayne Ozanne, who herself suffered mental health issues following attempts to change her own sexual orientation because of her religious beliefs added:

*“For many, much of this report will confirm what they already know regarding the dangers of “conversion therapy”. However, it is the scale and severity of the problems experienced and the age at which children are said to be exposed to these practices that are of the gravest concern. The high level of reports of attempted suicide and suicidal thoughts amongst those who have attempted to change their sexual orientation is not something that can be easily dismissed. These are serious safeguarding issues which require urgent action.”*

The survey was overseen by an influential Advisory Board made up of some of the most senior statistical, religious and healthcare professionals in the UK. One of its members, Martin Pollecoff, Chair of the UK Council of Psychotherapists commented that:

*“It is desperately sad that so few said they had sought help from the medical profession, but instead turned to discredited methods that we know cause significant harm to try and change their sexual orientation. Our aim is to help people come to terms with their sexuality so that they can embrace and celebrate who they are, rather than living in shame and fear.”*

Another member of the Advisory Board, Teddy Prout of Humanists UK, added:

*“Is it any wonder that so many people decide to walk away from their religious identity when the community who is supposed to be there to love and support them cause them such harm? We have a growing group of “apostate” LGBT+ members in Humanists UK who have had to break free from what they found to be a highly toxic and controlling environment in order to be able to survive and flourish. The Government urgently needs to act on its commitment to end the practise of conversion therapy once and for all.”*

The report is being presented at a lunchtime fringe meeting at the General Synod on February 21<sup>st</sup> 2019 ahead of the Church of England’s own presentation of its proposed “Pastoral Principles” for pastoral ministry among LGBTI+ people in the Church. **ENDS**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT [JAYNE OZANNE](#) ON 07944 194 691**

## **NOTES**

1. The **2018 Faith & Sexuality Survey** was designed to examine the role religious belief has on people's understanding and acceptance of their sexual orientation in the UK.
2. The survey was promoted through a range of social media platforms and national newspapers and ran from 12th to 31st December 2018.
3. The survey attracted 4613 eligible responses, of which 3908 were completed.
4. The survey was open to all UK individuals over 16. Participants came from all age, sexuality and racial/ethnic groups and a variety of belief backgrounds, including those of no belief.
5. Given the survey's focus on sexuality, the report has adopted the acronym "LGBQ+" to refer to the group of respondents who self-defined as either "lesbian", "gay", "bisexual", "queer", "pansexual", "asexual" or "same-sex attracted".
6. The project was co-ordinated by the [Ozanne Foundation](#) and was overseen by an influential [Advisory Board](#) consisting of some of the most senior UK statistical, religious and healthcare professionals:

*Dr Jamie Harrison, Chair of the House of Laity, Church of England*

*Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, Senior Rabbi to Reform Judaism*

*Martin Pollecoff, Chair of UK Council of Psychotherapists*

*Teddy Prout, Director of Community Services Humanists UK*

*Khakan Qureshi, Founder of Birmingham South Asian LGBT – Finding a Voice*

*Professor Sir Bernard Silverman, Former President of the Royal Statistical Society*

*Rt Revd Dr David Walker, Bishop of Manchester*

7. The full set of results can be downloaded [here](#)
8. The survey questionnaire can be downloaded [here](#).
9. The full Executive Report can be found downloaded [here](#), and the relevant sections:

Foreword – Rt Revd Paul Bayes, Bishop of Liverpool and Chair of Ozanne Foundation  
[www.bit.ly/NFSS\\_Foreword](http://www.bit.ly/NFSS_Foreword)

Director's Report – Jayne Ozanne, Director of Ozanne Foundation  
[www.bit.ly/NFSS\\_DirectorsReport](http://www.bit.ly/NFSS_DirectorsReport)

Executive Summary  
[www.bit.ly/NFSS\\_ExecSummary](http://www.bit.ly/NFSS_ExecSummary)

Section 1 – Demographic & Religious Belief Profile of Respondents  
[www.bit.ly/NFSS\\_Section1](http://www.bit.ly/NFSS_Section1)

Section 2 – Sexual Orientation & Relationship Status

[www.bit.ly/NFSS\\_Section2](http://www.bit.ly/NFSS_Section2)

Section 3 – Experience of Attempting to Change Sexual Orientation

[www.bit.ly/NFSS\\_Section3](http://www.bit.ly/NFSS_Section3)

Section 4 - Impact of Attempting to Change Sexual Orientation

[www.bit.ly/NFSS\\_Section4](http://www.bit.ly/NFSS_Section4)

Section 5 - Attitudes Towards Criminalising Sexual Orientation Change Therapy

[www.bit.ly/NFSS\\_Section5](http://www.bit.ly/NFSS_Section5)

Section 6 - Measures of Well-being – Physical, Mental, Emotional & Spiritual

[www.bit.ly/NFSS\\_Section6](http://www.bit.ly/NFSS_Section6)

10. The Church of England's *Living in Love and Faith Project and the Pastoral Advisory Group* paper (GS Misc 1200), including the "Pastoral Principles for Living Well together" can be downloaded [here](#).
11. The December 2018 press release announcing the project can be downloaded [here](#).
12. The [Ozanne Foundation](#) was launched as a registered charity in 2018. It is directed by [Jayne Ozanne](#) and chaired by the Bishop of Liverpool, the [Rt Revd Paul Bayes](#), who is supported by a senior [Board of Trustees](#) and an influential [Council of Reference](#). The UK based charity works with religious organisations around the world to eliminate discrimination based on sexuality or gender in order to celebrate the equality and diversity of all.