

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Joe Fitzpatrick MSP
Convener
Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

23 September 2022

Dear Joe

I am writing to update the Committee on the Scottish Government's plans for a Human Rights Bill and legislation to end conversion practices. Our commitment to these areas of work was reiterated in the 2022/23 Programme for Government.

Human Rights Bill

As the Committee knows, the Scottish Government committed to introducing a Human Rights Bill to give effect to a number of internationally recognised human rights treaties, as far as possible within devolved competence and to strengthen domestic legal protections by making them enforceable in Scots law. This Bill will demonstrate global human rights leadership, placing Scotland at the forefront of progressive human rights legislation and, most importantly, practice.

Developing a Bill of this nature is a complex and far-reaching endeavour. We are continuing to develop proposals for the Bill and we intend to consult on those proposals in the first half of next year.

Ending Conversion Practices

The Expert Advisory Group on Ending Conversion Practices (EAG), which we established in March 2022 following the Committee's report, is completing its work and is due to share its report and recommendations shortly. You will recall that the EAG has been tasked with providing advice on ways to end conversion practices including both legislative and non-legislative measures and to consider a definition of conversion practices. Its work will provide an important foundation for the development of a Bill.

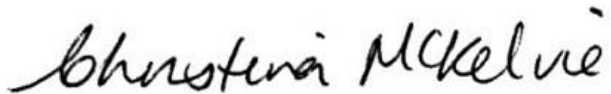
Taking into account the report of the EAG, the Committee's report and other evidence, we will develop policy proposals for legislation. I intend to keep the Committee informed as we develop these policy positions as well as on the consultation process, with the aim of avoiding duplication of work and the desire to avoid taking evidence multiple times from the same stakeholders, particularly those with lived experience who may be re-traumatised by recounting their experience.

I would therefore like to propose the following approach to working together on the Bill policy and consultation:

1. I will provide regular updates to the Committee on policy development for the ending conversion practices legislation, to seek views;
2. After we publish a consultation on the bill, I suggest we arrange joint stakeholder roundtable events to focus on specific themes. These could be run by a specialist facilitator.

I look forward to hearing from you and working with you on both of these important pieces of legislation.

Yours sincerely,



CHRISTINA MCKELVIE