

The Church of England's General Synod has backed a motion calling for a ban on the practice of Conversion Therapy aimed at altering sexual orientation.

Members of the Church's national assembly, which is holding its annual July sessions in York, voted to endorse a Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy signed by The Royal College of Psychiatrists and others condemning the practice. The joint statement describes Conversion Therapy as unethical, potentially harmful and having "no place in the modern world".

The motion was moved by Jayne Ozanne, who represents laity in the Diocese of Oxford, with amendments moved by Canon Dr Jamie Harrison (Durham) and the Revd Andrew Dotchin (St Edmundsbury and Ipswich) which were carried.

Opening the debate, Ms Ozanne said: "In short, conversation therapy is harmful, dangerous and just doesn't work.

"People may be able to alter their behaviour but they can never alter their innate desire."

She added: "This debate is actually quite simple. Do we trust our medical health professions and academics (including many sincere godly Christians) to know what they are talking about?

"Should we listen to the voices of those we and others have unwittingly harmed? Should we learn from our mistakes, and seek to protect future generations from the sort of damage that was done to me and so many others?"

Speaking during the debate the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu said: "The sooner the practice of so-called conversion therapy is banned, I can sleep at night."

The Bishop of Liverpool, Paul Bayes, said: "As the world listens to us the world needs to hear us say that LGBTI+ orientation and identity is not a crime.

"LGBTI+ orientation and identity is not a sickness. And LGBTI+ orientation and identity is not a sin.

"We must distinguish between an ascetic and a therapeutic approach. In the Church we are certainly called to help one another to conform their lives to Jesus Christ and to live lives of holiness, but we do not need to engage people in healing therapy if they are not sick."

Members voted by houses on the amended motion. The votes in the House of Bishops were 36 for and one against, with no abstentions. In the House of Clergy 135 backed the motion with 25 against and 13 abstentions. In the House of Laity 127 supported the motion with 48 opposing and 13 abstentions.

## Notes to Editors

The full motion agreed was:

*That this Synod:*

- a. *endorse the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK of November 2015, signed by The Royal College of Psychiatrists and others, that the practice of gay conversion therapy has no place in the modern world, is unethical, potentially harmful and not supported by evidence;*
- b. *call upon the Church to be sensitive to, and to listen to, contemporary expressions of gender identity;*
- c. *and call on the government to ban the practice of Conversion Therapy.*

A live stream of Synod proceedings, including previous sessions, can be [viewed here](#).

A background paper accompanying the motion by Jayne Ozanne is [available here](#).

A background paper from the Secretary General is [available here](#).

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