

UKCP statement on the 'reparative' therapy of members of sexual minorities

UKCP does not consider homosexuality or bisexuality, or transsexual and transgendered states to be pathologies, mental disorders or indicative of developmental arrest. These are not symptoms to be treated by psychotherapists, in the sense of attempting to change or remove them.

It follows that no responsible psychotherapist will attempt to 'convert' a client from homosexuality to heterosexuality ('reparative' therapy). Hence, the UKCP notes with concern research (Bartlett, Smith, King, 2009) indicating that as many as one in six therapists surveyed were willing to contract to reduce 'same sex attraction'. These therapists were not working on a religious basis; many were members of the main professional organisations.

To the contrary, UKCP honours and respects sexual diversity as part of our approach to diversity, equalities and social responsibility. In this regard, our position is the same as that of many other professional organisations such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, Royal College of Psychiatrists, the American Psychiatric Association (2000), the American Medical Association, and the American Psychological Association (2009).

UKCP considers that more work is needed to refine the clinical theories utilized by psychotherapists of all modalities. For example, practitioners should be careful when faced with male or female clients/patients who ask for conversion therapy as such requests often mask other pressing issues. Or, to give a further instance, there is evidence that uncritical acceptance by some psychotherapists that there is a specific kind of pathological family background to male homosexuality - 'possessive mother/distant father', or 'faulty attachments' - is being used to justify 'reparative' therapy. UKCP rejects this argument. To date, the 'causes' of both heterosexuality and homosexuality remain unknown.

Psychotherapists, educators and the media need to work more energetically and in partnership to prevent the re-pathologization of LGBT people. We call on our colleagues in other professional organisations of psychotherapists and counsellors to indicate their support for this statement.

United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy

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REFERENCES

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