



# UNITED KINGDOM

## ASYLUM

The government held a consultation on its [New Plan for Immigration](#), which was harshly [criticised by NGOs](#). First, asylum applicants might be placed in reception centres abroad, possibly even in the country they are fleeing from – this would expose LGBTQI asylum seekers to unprecedented risk of violence. Second, appeal procedures would also be fast tracked. Third, evidence of someone’s SOGIESC would have to be provided at the beginning of the procedure, which is virtually impossible for LGBTQI people as they are fleeing from countries where having such evidence could be life threatening. In July, the government [responded](#) to these concerns by [saying](#) it would train all relevant staff.

CSOs [expressed](#) concern about the flawed Aspen cards, which have [left](#) thousands of asylum seekers unable to access their allowance.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Anti-trans rhetoric continued to cause serious damage in the UK again this year. Civil society reports that mainstream newspapers ran one or more anti-trans articles every day. In November, trans people and allies [held](#) a protest outside BBC’s office for its [transphobic](#) articles. A number of LGBTQ employees [quit](#) the BBC due to concerns over its transphobic reporting. The National Student Union [continued](#) to stand with trans people in the ever escalating wave of anti-trans hate speech, including in academia.

With anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ+ hate rising in the UK and across the world, 39 LGBTQ+ organisations released an [open letter](#) on 18 May, calling on the UK’s Equality and Human Rights Commission’s (EHRC) to step up for LGBTQ+ communities.

Civil society is alarmed that the Charity Commission [approved](#) the registration of the ‘LGB Alliance’ as a public charity, despite several NGOs and politicians having called it an anti-trans “hate group”. Mermaids, with [support](#) from other CSOs, [filed](#) an appeal.

A Scottish parliamentary candidate [spread](#) misinformation that Stonewall and LGBT Youth Scotland groups would want to lower the age of consent to 10.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Hate crimes [remained](#) a serious issue. The UK Home

Office annual hate crime statistics report [highlighted](#) that homophobic hate crimes increased by 7% and transphobic hate crimes by 3%, in England and Wales. Media [reported](#) that the increase of hate crimes based on sexual orientation was higher, 12%.

In March, the Scottish parliament successfully passed a [new hate crime law](#) which covers LGBTI people as protected groups and strengthens protections. It will enter into force in 2022. The Crown Office (COPFS) published its annual [Hate Crime in Scotland](#) report in June, finding that the number of homophobic hate crimes continued to [increase](#) in Scotland for the sixth year in a row.

Galop’s 2021 [Hate Crime Report](#) found that three in five LGBT+ people in the UK experiencing hate crime wanted and needed help, but only one in five were able to access support.

Civil society [continued](#) advocating for comprehensive hate crime legislation in England and Wales.

Several hate crimes were committed against LGBTI people again this year. For instance, a trans woman [suffered](#) serious stabbing injuries in Birmingham in September.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland [highlighted](#) in its annual report that the number of homophobic incidents increased by 16% in 2021/2022, reaching a record high since 2004/2005. Transphobic hate crimes have also been on the rise, but the law only covers sexual orientation, so they must instead be pursued as homophobic incidents.

The Northern Ireland Department of Justice is currently working on pre-consultation on a new Hate Crime Bill, which will [include](#) “age, sex/gender and variations in sex characteristics”, and trans people under “sex/gender”.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

The process of banning conversion therapy was further [stalled](#) this year. In March, members of LGBTI groups in several parties [urged](#) the UK government to speed up the process. Several people [shared](#) their experiences of being subject to therapies. In April, Mermaids [published](#) a study on Gender Identity “Conversion Therapy” documenting accounts of “verbal abuse, isolation, beatings, forced feeding or food deprivation, corrective rape and forced nudity”.

In May, the UK government affirmed its support for the ban



again, but not without holding a consultation on the issue first. The commitment was also included in the Queen's speech at the State Opening of Parliament in May. Civil society continued lobbying for a ban.

Several religious groups warned that the ban would criminalise church leaders and limit freedom of religion and freedom of thought. Other religious groups expressed support for the ban.

On 1 October, senior lawyers, academics, MPs and civil society groups signed the Cooper Report on how to effectively legislate for a ban, including by broadly defining the therapies as “any practice that seeks to suppress, ‘cure’ or change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity”.

In the May Scottish parliamentary election, all parties elected promised to ban conversion therapy. In September, the Scottish Parliament equality committee began an inquiry, and took evidence from survivors, LGBTI organisations, human rights organisations, and religious groups. On 18 November, the Scottish Government announced an expert advisory group to develop proposals for a ban.

On 21 April, Northern Ireland Assembly passed a non-directive motion on a ban on conversion therapy practises. Work is currently being undertaken by the Department for Communities in research and draft legislation to bring this about.

## DATA COLLECTION

The census in England, Wales and Northern Ireland took place on 21 March. Several LGBTI organisations encouraged the community to answer the voluntary questions on sexual orientation or gender identity to have a better idea of the size of the community. Gendered Intelligence advised trans people to answer by self-identifying. The census guidance initially said that the respondents could enter the gender marker from their passport, which can be changed in the UK without a legal process. Anti-trans groups lobbied to have this section changed. In March, the High Court ordered to remove ‘passport’ from the list. Accordingly, respondents were asked to indicate the ‘sex’ on their birth certificate or gender recognition certificate.

The anti-trans group Fair Play for Women began court action in November to challenge the 2022 Census in Scotland, which would allow trans people to self-identify.

## EDUCATION

The government decided to cut funding for anti-LGBT+ bullying programmes despite an alarming 46% of LGBT+ students feeling unsafe at school.

In June, Just Like Us released the ‘Growing up LGBT+’ report finding that LGBT+ students are twice as likely to have been bullied than their cisgender heterosexual peers and that 91% have heard negative language about being LGBT+ just in the past year. Over 1,000 LGBT+ students aged 11-18 participated in the survey. The study also found that LGBT+ students in Northern Ireland fared the worst. 82% of them have contemplated suicide compared to a fourth of that rate among non-LGBT+ peers. They were also more likely to have suicidal thoughts than LGBT+ youth in England (67%), Scotland (79%), or Wales (73%).

The Scottish government made available new resources on how schools can support trans students.

Relationship and sex education reform is ongoing in Northern Ireland, seeking to have better inclusion of LGBTIQA+ issues.

## EMPLOYMENT

In May, Minister for Women and Equalities Liz Truss encouraged the government to withdraw from Stonewall's employment scheme, which promotes a safe and inclusive workplace for LGBT+ staff. A number of government entities, such as the Ministry of Justice, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and media outlets have pulled out.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In March, Jayne Ozanne, a survivor of conversion therapy, James Morton, and Ellen Murray all quit the government's LGBT+ Advisory Panel due to their concerns of the government's growing hostility towards LGBT+ and particularly trans people. The Advisory Panel was disbanded in April. Minister for Women and Equalities Liz Truss said a new panel would be set up soon.

In March, the Court of Session ruled that the Scottish Government acted lawfully in including trans women in an equal opportunities measure to improve women's representation on public boards.

The UK government postponed the deadline for its



consultation on gender neutral bathrooms, sparking criticism from trans groups.

## FAMILY

In February, the UK parliament tabled a bill on parental leave for Ministers, but the final wording uses the term 'mother' instead of the original 'pregnant people', erasing all pregnant people who do not identify as women.

## FOREIGN POLICY

As co-chairs of the Equal Rights Coalition, the UK and Argentina launched the ERC's first strategic plan for the period of 2021-2026.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The new 'Police, crime, sentencing and courts' bill passed almost all legislative phases by the end of the year, and has been criticised nationally and internationally. The law would give powers to the police to disperse events that 'cause serious annoyance' for the neighbourhood.

Omagh held its first Pride parade this year, highlighting the need for rural LGBTQI visibility.

## HEALTH

In January, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published a report on the provision of trans healthcare by the NHS Tavistock, concluding that the NHS is violating its obligations by imposing excruciatingly long waiting lines on trans people. While the law sets out that specialist care should be provided within 18 weeks, most trans people wait for over a year to get their first appointment and 26% wait for two years. CQC warned that those waiting are at risk of self-harm and mental health problems. Gendered Intelligence highlighted that the responsibility to reform the system falls on the NHS, and not on care providers like Tavistock. The UK government had previously planned waiting lists to be significantly cut by 2022.

A study conducted with 13 families with trans and gender-non-conforming children in England affirmed that families struggle with lengthy waiting lists, geographical inaccessibility, and a lack of knowledge from clinicians who also fail to value family expertise.

Access to gender affirming healthcare for trans adults in Northern Ireland continued to be almost completely non-

existent. A consultant was hired this year to help with the backlog, but the waiting times average three to five years.

In August the Scottish Government promised to overhaul trans healthcare in Scotland in 2022-2024, bringing waiting times down to 18 weeks, and improving support and delivery, and on 20 December published a plan for progressing this.

On 26 March, the High Court ruled in the AB v Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust case that if a young person, their parents, and their doctors all consent to them accessing puberty blockers and think it is in the best interest of the child, the minor does not need to get the approval of a court. The judgement practically reversed the 2020 Bell ruling.

This judgement restates the rights of the child, but children without supportive parents still need to go to court. In mid-April, the NHSE published its new puberty blockers guidelines to fall in line with the March ruling. The Court of Appeal quashed the Bell v Tavistock ruling on 17 September, confirming that it is ultimately "for clinicians to exercise their judgement" around the referral of patients for puberty delaying treatment, seeing as they are already "subject to professional regulation and oversight".

The three-month blood donation deferral period for men who have sex with men was abolished on 1 March. From June, those wanting to donate in England, Scotland, and Wales are asked about risky behaviours instead. In Northern Ireland, the regulation came into force in September. The regulations still include anti-Black language by imposing a three-month deferral period on "anyone who has slept with someone from parts of the world where HIV and AIDS are 'very common'".

In July, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on HIV and AIDS launched a report on how to increase and normalise HIV testing across the UK.

Metro published its study on the access of sexual health services of those over 45, finding fear of stigma, a lack of awareness of health risks, and lack of access to services.

## HOUSING

Akt released 'the lgbtq+ youth homelessness report' and thematic briefings, highlighting that the most common reason among for homelessness was family rejection:



61% felt threatened or scared by their family before becoming homeless. Half of the respondents feared that expressing their LGBTQ+ identity to family members would lead to them being evicted; and 17% said they felt they had to engage in casual sex to find somewhere to stay while they were homeless. CSOs called on London's mayoral candidates to put a strategy in place to address homelessness among LGBTIQ+ people. Sadiq Khan was reelected as mayor and promised to invest into emergency housing for those most vulnerable, including LGBTIQ+ people.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Activists were targeted by hate and smear campaigns. The BBC for instance, ran an entire smear podcast series on Stonewall. A number of staff quit the organisation due to such attacks and burnout.

The Kaleidoscope 'LGBTI+ People in the Commonwealth in the Covid Era: An Update report found that 61% of the participating organisations had no financial reserves and more than half have lost earnings during COVID-19.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In May, the UK government rejected the plea of over 136,000 people who signed a petition calling for legal gender recognition (LGR) for people whose identity does not fit in the gender binary, saying it would have too "complex practical consequences" and will not be on the agenda in the coming years.

The gender recognition certificate fee was reduced from £140 to £5. While a positive step, it is one of the few positives in the UK government's LGR law reform process for England and Wales.

The Scottish government promised improvements in terms of non-binary people's rights and hosted a Non-Binary Working Group, made up of non-binary people and allies. The Group's recommendations will help the government publish its action plan by spring 2023. In September, the Scottish government published the analysis of consultation responses on the draft Gender Recognition Reform Bill, concluding that most contributors envisioned a statutory declaration-based system. Minister Nicola Sturgeon confirmed that LGR reform will be on the parliament's agenda in 2022.

In May, the Northern Ireland High Court ruled the diagnosis of having a 'disorder' can no longer be a legitimate requirement of LGR.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The new trans inclusion policy of the Rugby Football Union (RFU) includes limitations on trans women.

LGBT+ veterans will be able to reclaim medals they were awarded before being expelled from the army for being LGBT+.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The High Court ruled in July that trans women are lawfully housed in women's prisons.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Although abortions were legalised in Northern Ireland in 2020, services remain inaccessible. The Department of Health has failed to issue any guidance to health and social care trusts on the provision of abortion services, including when and in what circumstances medical staff may exercise their freedom of conscience when delivering a service.

Westminster issued a formal direction in July to the Department of Health to set up full abortion services by no later than March 2022. The current First Minister Paul Givan MA tried to introduce a bill to prevent abortions in NI in cases of non-fatal disabilities, but this fell after a close vote in December.



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