

CAN-SG

The Clinical Advisory Network on Sex & Gender



20 November 2023

Letter of support from Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender (CAN-SG)

Dr Christian Buckland Chair UKCP

Dear Dr Buckland,

CAN-SG is a group of over 100 clinicians and therapists from across the UK, including several members of UKCP, BPC and BACP, who are concerned about the care of patients suffering from gender dysphoria.

We are writing to welcome and support the UK Council for Psychotherapy's guidance and position statement on gender-critical views and its implications for psychotherapeutic practice for UKCP members and patients / service users.

UKCP has formally recognised that gender-critical beliefs and the exploratory approaches associated with them are protected by law. The guidance applies especially to young people and families affected with gender-related distress (GRD). It aligns with the recommendations made within the interim Cass Review report and the current official position of the NHS in setting up the new CYP Gender Dysphoria services. Exploratory approaches can be fully consonant with the high standards set out in UKCP's Code of Ethics and Professional Practice. This is a big step towards integrating evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence in supporting vulnerable people with GRD, whilst acknowledging the limitations of affirmative-only and medical practices.

Dr Buckland's reference to the possible multi-factorial aetiology with regards to GRD and / or individual's subjective experience of gender identity and sexed bodies, is an important reminder of the available evidence in gender healthcare. UKCP's statement also highlights the importance of protecting exploratory psychotherapeutic approaches in relation to GRD and not conflating exploratory approaches with conversion therapy / aversion practices. Unless we are free to engage with our patients / service users and explore the multiple factors influencing the development of their gendered experiences and feelings, and the many possible developmental outcomes and trajectories, we will not be able to tell what works for whom.

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#CANSGFirstDoNoHarm

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CAN-SG, actively supports the further development and refinement of modified psychotherapeutic interventions (for individuals, couples, groups and families) when supporting people and families who are questioning their biological sex.

We invite individual UKCP member colleges / institutions to acknowledge the importance of exploratory psychotherapy (of any theoretical approach) for CYP GRD and the important differences to conversion and affirmative practices. As group consisting of clinicians, doctors, psychologists and psychotherapists we feel responsible for ensuring our patients and service users have access to ethical, evidence-based and developmentally-appropriate holistic care when questioning their gender and / or suffering from GRD.

Yours sincerely,

Louise Irvine

CAN-SG Co-chair

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