

# **The Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee**

## **End Conversion Therapy/Practices Virtual Engagement Session in private with the Committee and Individuals with lived experiences**

**26 October 2021**

**Participant: M (she/her)**

**Committee Member: Pam Duncan-Glancy**

My experience began in the early 1980s when I was aged around 8. I began experimenting with my sexuality and cross-dressing. When my grandfather caught me he stripped me down and put me in the coal bunker and tell me not to move. He would say that he would know if I had moved because I would be dusty/dirty. After I while, he would return and ask “have you learned your lesson?”.

It didn't change anything. It made me more determined.

My parents were abusive. They and my grandparents were bigoted, cruel and opinionated. I loved my grandfather, but I realise what he did to me was bad.

Into adulthood I turned to drugs. I had psychotherapy. There was a lack of support within the workplace at the time, but I eventually worked my way onto support.

Maybe my case is mild compared to others. If you don't know others have gone through it, you think it's normal.

[M indicated she would try to answer questions from the Committee member.]

**PD-G:** Did you have any support when you were younger?

M: Not really, back then in the 80s. I tried to kill myself. I finally got support through gender services, but they need better funding now.

**PD-G:** Do you feel able to tell me about your family?

M: They were very closed. They wanted to “clean me out”. They brought on mental health issues. I would apologise to them, but they took pleasure in tearing my apology apart bit by bit. Then they would tell me to go away and think about it. I lived my life for other people rather than myself. My grandparents ruled, my parents followed. As I became more confident, their negativity increased. I just have flashes of memories. I try to do a Taylor Swift and ‘shake it off’.

**PD-G:** Can you tell me what helped as you got older?

M: Getting in touch with other folk. Sharing experiences can help others understand. I've also had good support from UNITE and the STUC women's conference.

**PD-G:** What support do you think would have helped at the time?

M: Had it been available, a support network of different types of people. We're richer together. Any support in the future has to be robust. Now, I'm a clinical support worker in a cancer unit. Being yourself encourages others.

I used the 'listening ear' service at gender services. That's unbiased and listens without judging. It was accessible and flexible in terms of where and when to meet and I was always made at ease. I think that could be expanded and made more widely available. There may be public service facilities that could accommodate the service – a bookshop? A coffee shop? A quiet room in a workplace? A union building?

**PD-G:** What has the longer-term impact been?

M: Mental health issues. Panic attacks. It's hard to trust people. I have self-doubt. I'm withdrawn and reserved. I feel like an outsider, with not many friends.