

LGBT+ POC & Minority Ethnic Faith Experiences of Conversion Practices

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Introduction

The National LGBT survey¹ found that ethnic minority respondents were up to 2 x more likely to be offered, or to have undergone, conversion therapy than white respondents. Transgender respondents within black and minority ethnic faith communities are at even greater risk.²

We have heard from House of Rainbow³, Sarbat Sikhs⁴, Shakti Women's Aid⁵ and The Naz and Matt Foundation⁶ that without proper consideration of the impact of criminal measures and civil measures upon minority ethnic faith communities and communities of colour, there will be unintended consequences, including risks to victims and survivors of Conversion Practices (CP) within the LGBT+ community.

These communities will potentially be put at further risk due to historically established prejudice and discrimination within the criminal justice system. There are legitimate concerns and feelings of apprehension around reporting whilst this remains the case. For this reason, as has been said within the EAG, considerable work will be required within communities to understand these risks, to safeguard, and to provide awareness and understanding about the legislative measures and support available.

People of colour and those within minority ethnic faith communities experience CP differently to the wider white and / or Christian population. There are specific risks and issues that must be considered when developing this legislation. We will outline this as best we can here.

Having carried out stakeholder engagement and a literature review regarding conversion practices (CP) and the shape that they take in minority ethnic faith communities, and in communities of colour in the

¹ UK Government Equality Office, July 2018.

² Ogunmuyiwa (2022) 'Banning Conversion Practices in Ethnic Minority Communities: Project Summary'.

³ [House of Rainbow](#).

⁴ [Sarbat Sikhs](#).

⁵ [Shakti Women's Aid \(shaktiedinburgh.co.uk\)](#).

⁶ [Naz and Matt Foundation - Be The Person You Were Born To Be](#).

UK, we have been able to highlight key themes and develop recommendations (or 'must dos') for the EAG to consider – these aim to aid the team working on drafting legislation against CP and developing a civil scheme to work with the public to understand these diverse experiences so as to avoid putting anyone at further risk or creating unintended negative consequences.

We will cover:

- Wide considerations from literature
- THEME 1) Suppression, cultural coercion and consent
- THEME 2) Reconciliation of sexual orientation, gender identity and religious identity
- THEME 3) Diverse practices and family: Honour, dishonour, abuse and shame
- THEME 4) Institutional racism and underrepresentation in policy development
- THEME 5) The need for culturally competent support and capacity building

Based on this short report and work with stakeholders we make our recommendations to the EAG.

Wide considerations from literature

Participants in Tehara's⁷ thesis work indicated that difficulties arose in discussing issues around sex and sexuality when coming from a South Asian background because they felt that they lacked a language and conceptualisation to discuss their sexuality. Participants faced the challenge of engaging with disinterested communities and they often found themselves misunderstood. Though Tehara outlines the clear distinctions between Karmic faiths (Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism) and Abrahamic traditions (Islam, Judaism and Christianity), the concerns were similar. We see similar concerns within communities of colour who do not follow any specific faith practice. There are both religious and cultural implications for LGBT+ people of colour and those from minority ethnic faith communities with regards to suppression of sexual orientation and gender identity and conversion practices.

According to Kawale,⁸ "whiteness pervades the character of debates on sexuality" – this alludes to the fact that for many within diverse minority ethnic faith communities, and those in communities of colour who are LGBT+, not only are they not seen within mainstream discourse, but being LGBT+ is often characterised as a white and western issue, or invasive problem within some communities – a problem that needs to be 'fixed' or suppressed.

Within their own literature review, Fry et al⁹ share similar themes including "conflicts regarding sexual and religious identities and strategic concealment of identity to preserve family and cultural norms¹⁰, and issues around the notion of homosexuality as a "Western disease."¹¹

⁷ Jaspreet Singh Tehara (2020) 'British South Asian and bisexual an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the male perspective.' [British South Asian and Bisexual.pdf \(roehampton.ac.uk\)](https://roehampton.ac.uk/).

⁸ Siraj, A. (2011) 'Isolated, invisible and in the closet: The life story of Scottish Muslim lesbians'. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 15(1), 99–121. Pg 102. [Isolated, Invisible, and in the Closet: The Life Story of a Scottish Muslim Lesbian: Journal of Lesbian Studies: Vol 15, No 1 \(tandfonline.com\)](https://doi.org/10.1080/10892699.2011.581111).

⁹ Fry, Munro and Smith et al (2020) 'Intersectionality and South Asian Non-Normative Sexualities: The case of South Asian lesbians and bisexual women in the United Kingdom'. Pg 02.

¹⁰ Christ in Fry, Munro and Smith et al (2020) 'Intersectionality and South Asian Non-Normative Sexualities: The case of South Asian lesbians and bisexual women in the United Kingdom'.

¹¹ Wilson in Fry, Munro and Smith et al (2020) 'Intersectionality and South Asian Non-Normative Sexualities: The case of South Asian lesbians and bisexual women in the United Kingdom'.

As does Siraj¹²:

“Sexist stereotypes in communities of colour deny the existence of lesbians of colour. There are further cultural, linguistic and ethnic obstacles that prevent non-White lesbians from having a voice: The fact that there is no word for lesbian in Bengali, Hindi or Urdu is a linguistic clue to cultural and structural organization of sexuality in the respective societies. It is a reflection of the absence of an identity constructed primarily around sexuality. Gay identity is a rather new Western construction problematized by issues of gender, class and race. [...] The “triple jeopardy” of homophobia, racism, and sexism [...] meaning that “there is no safe place, no place to belong, whether in the majority or minority community¹³”.

Lesbianism is perceived to be ‘a symptom of “westoxification” (being intoxicated by secular Western culture¹⁴ - coming out, as ‘evidence of women’s cultural assimilation with the White majority and their adoption of fundamentally “un-Muslim” norms and values’.¹⁵

According to Ghabrial - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer People of Colour experience unique and contextual forms of prejudice and stigma¹⁶ that lead to increased chances and likelihood of mental and physical health issues.¹⁷ Rehman et al¹⁸ found that this minority stress can be induced by conflicting sociocultural norms, can create interpersonal inhibitors to coming out and can lead to problematic coping. They state that:

¹² Siraj, A. (2011) ‘Isolated, invisible and in the closet: The life story of Scottish Muslim lesbians’. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 15(1), 99–121. [Isolated, Invisible, and in the Closet: The Life Story of a Scottish Muslim Lesbian: Journal of Lesbian Studies: Vol 15, No 1 \(tandfonline.com\)](#).

¹³ Bradshaw, 1994 in Siraj, A. (2011) ‘Isolated, invisible and in the closet: The life story of Scottish Muslim lesbians’. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 15(1), 99–121. Pg 104-105. [Isolated, Invisible, and in the Closet: The Life Story of a Scottish Muslim Lesbian: Journal of Lesbian Studies: Vol 15, No 1 \(tandfonline.com\)](#).

¹⁴ Yip, 2004 in Siraj, A. (2011) ‘Isolated, invisible and in the closet: The life story of Scottish Muslim lesbians’. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 15(1), 99–121. Pg 103. [Isolated, Invisible, and in the Closet: The Life Story of a Scottish Muslim Lesbian: Journal of Lesbian Studies: Vol 15, No 1 \(tandfonline.com\)](#).

¹⁵ Jaspal & Siraj, in press in Siraj, A. (2011) ‘Isolated, invisible and in the closet: The life story of Scottish Muslim lesbians’. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 15(1), 99–121. Pg 103. [Isolated, Invisible, and in the Closet: The Life Story of a Scottish Muslim Lesbian: Journal of Lesbian Studies: Vol 15, No 1 \(tandfonline.com\)](#).

¹⁶ Meyer – on Minority stress in Meyer (2003) ‘Prejudice, Social Stress, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations: Conceptual Issues and Research Evidence’. [Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. - PsycNET \(apa.org\)](#).

¹⁷ Jaspreet Singh Tehara (2020), ‘British South Asian and bisexual an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the male perspective’. Pg 36. [British South Asian and Bisexual.pdf \(roehampton.ac.uk\)](#).

¹⁸ Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) ‘Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK’: *Journal of Homosexuality*: Vol 68, No 14.

“BAME LGB individuals are exposed to stressors due to their intersecting sexual, gender, religious, and cultural identities. Major psychological stressors include stigmatised identity, expectations of a heterosexual marriage, and maladaptive coping strategies”.¹⁹

Key themes outlined by Tehara²⁰ see the intersections between race, sexuality and gender. They include being othered (feeling different and not understanding one’s difference); the dichotomy of being divided (the strong sense of division felt between traditional family life/ inside the home and life outside of the home/family) presenting feelings of a duality of existence; isolation and exceptionalism (being alone and being different); uneasiness and distress, lack of knowledge of differing sexualities (and sexuality in general); shame with regards to sense of self - learning and acceptance of who one is and “finding a place somewhere in the middle” [between culture, faith and identity]²¹; difficulty engaging with family elders; heteronormativity, lack of acceptance in the community (cultural stigma); feelings of disrupted connections with family, and an inability to communicate diverse sexual orientations and fluidity.²²

The sense that one is traversing between who they are, and their cultural or religious expectations, is one we heard often. From Fry et al’s interviews, similar themes were discussed:

“Occupying a diasporic position meant, for most of the contributors, having complex relationships across the country of familial origin and the United Kingdom, which required a significant amount of identity and lifestyle management. Key themes included the following: cultural identities, specifically issues concerning the negotiation of both Asian and lesbian, bisexual or gay identities; challenges associated with heteronormativity and living within British Asian communities

¹⁹ Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) ‘Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK’. Pg 01.

[Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\)](#).

²⁰ Jaspreet Singh Tehara (2020) ‘British South Asian and bisexual an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the male perspective.’ [British South Asian and Bisexual.pdf \(roehampton.ac.uk\)](#)

²¹ Jaspreet Singh Tehara (2020) ‘British South Asian and bisexual an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the male perspective.’ Pg 80. [British South Asian and Bisexual.pdf \(roehampton.ac.uk\)](#)

²² Jaspreet Singh Tehara (2020) ‘British South Asian and bisexual an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the male perspective.’ Pgs 99-100. [British South Asian and Bisexual.pdf \(roehampton.ac.uk\)](#)

(for those who did so); relationships with family and friends; and processes of innovation and agency”.²³

Fry et al also concluded that these findings alongside the narratives of individuals “emphasise the importance of culture in shaping the life trajectories and lived experiences of LGB British South Asian women.”²⁴ Though for some women these cultural norms and practices can be positive and “synthesised with Western norms,” it was felt that “some aspects of South Asian cultures, notably heterosexist expectations and pressures” can shape these women’s lives in constricting ways, for example, “same-sex partnerships not having validation via the institution of marriage, double lives and closeting, and fractious ongoing relationship with the family of origin.”²⁵

Jaspal²⁶ discussed further themes for consideration here. Having interviewed 12 young British South Asian gay men it was found that ethnic otherization, rejection and identity threat were key issues faced:

“British South Asian gay men may face multiple layers of rejection—racism and homophobia from the general population, homophobia from the ethnoreligious community, and racism from White British gay men. This can deprive young British South Asian gay men of the only remaining source of social support that they perceive—namely the sexual in-group—inducing negative social and psychological outcomes for identity processes”²⁷.

Throughout the literature, emerging themes seemed to further highlight the links between minority stress, external pressure to suppress, reconciliation of identity (either race, cultural background or faith, with one’s sexual orientation or gender identity) and suppression of the self.

²³ Fry, Munro and Smith et al (2020) ‘Intersectionality and South Asian Non-Normative Sexualities: The case of South Asian lesbians and bisexual women in the United Kingdom’, pg 03.

²⁴ Fry, Munro and Smith et al (2020) ‘Intersectionality and South Asian Non-Normative Sexualities: The case of South Asian lesbians and bisexual women in the United Kingdom’. pg 14.

²⁵ Fry, Munro and Smith et al (2020) ‘Intersectionality and South Asian Non-Normative Sexualities: The case of South Asian lesbians and bisexual women in the United Kingdom’. pg 14.

²⁶ Jaspal, R. (2017). ‘Coping with perceived ethnic prejudice on the gay scene’. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 14(2), 172–190. [Coping with perceived ethnic prejudice on the gay scene: Journal of LGBT Youth: Vol 14, No 2 \(tandfonline.com\)](https://doi.org/10.1080/15388204.2017.1344444).

²⁷ Jaspal, R. (2017) ‘Coping with perceived ethnic prejudice on the gay scene’. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 14(2), 172–190. Pg 172. [Coping with perceived ethnic prejudice on the gay scene: Journal of LGBT Youth: Vol 14, No 2 \(tandfonline.com\)](https://doi.org/10.1080/15388204.2017.1344444).

Suppression, cultural coercion and ‘consent’

“I think it’s a subconscious thing. I don’t want to be with anyone, but I don’t understand why I don’t want to be with anyone, I put that down to society. I don’t mind gays at all, I don’t have any problem with them going out with someone of the same sex. I feel a wee bit better because I’m not doing anything about it, I’m only partially conforming to that role. I think I feel I’m slightly superior to them, I mean I am part of them (gays) but not really being with them. That’s why I know I can never be with a girl. I just can’t, it sometimes feels wrong, it doesn’t even come to my mind to be honest ... I think it’s a lot easier and less complicated being on your own. Also if I was to be with another person, I’d be throwing away so much, society, community, family, I mean, what they would think of me?”²⁸

People of colour and those of minority ethnic faith, experience conflict around ethnicity, sexuality and gender.²⁹ People are likely to feel such conflict “because the dominant culture, social structures, and norms do not typically reflect those of the minority group.”³⁰ People of colour and those of minority ethnic faith are “aware of the negative stereotypes surrounding homosexuality” within their community and, in some cases, apply these stereotypes to themselves³¹ and may “accept and internalise them”.³²

When exploring experiences of heterosexism and racism, Balsam et al³³ found that heterosexism had a greater impact on mental health than

²⁸ Informant in Siraj, A. (2011) ‘Isolated, invisible and in the closet: The life story of Scottish Muslim lesbians’. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 15(1), 99–121. Pg 115. [Isolated, Invisible, and in the Closet: The Life Story of a Scottish Muslim Lesbian: Journal of Lesbian Studies: Vol 15, No 1 \(tandfonline.com\)](https://doi.org/10.1080/10892699.2011.584444).

²⁹ Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) ‘Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK’. Pg 07. [Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\)](https://www.brighton.ac.uk/~jaspal.fish/research/service-provider-perspectives-of-minority-stress-rehman-jaspal-fish.pdf).

³⁰ Meyer (2003) ‘Prejudice, Social Stress, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations: Conceptual Issues and Research Evidence’. Pg 675. [Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. - PsycNET \(apa.org\)](https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.17.4.675)

³¹ Ryan & Futterman, 1998 in Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) ‘Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK’. Pg 08. [Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\)](https://www.brighton.ac.uk/~jaspal.fish/research/service-provider-perspectives-of-minority-stress-rehman-jaspal-fish.pdf).

³² Jaspal & Coyle 2009 in Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) ‘Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK’. Pg 08. [Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\)](https://www.brighton.ac.uk/~jaspal.fish/research/service-provider-perspectives-of-minority-stress-rehman-jaspal-fish.pdf).

³³ Balsam et al in Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) ‘Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK’. [Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\)](https://www.brighton.ac.uk/~jaspal.fish/research/service-provider-perspectives-of-minority-stress-rehman-jaspal-fish.pdf).

racism. People of colour and those of minority ethnic faith are still facing social stigma and prejudice based on sexuality and ethnicity.³⁴

“These stressors are driven by the cultural representations of sexuality and shape individuals’ views regarding their own sexual identity. The limited and stigmatising terminology and cultural misperceptions can in turn induce homophobic attitudes: “If your parents are from a culture where homophobia is like accepted and its part of - like my dad is from Jamaica and - the dominant dialogue around LGBT people in Jamaica is very homophobic.” (Lauren, female, social support work)

Rehman et al, in press: 07

Shakti Women’s Aid made it clear to us that of course many LGBT+ people in the UK have roots in other countries. Some of these countries are where conversion practices, as well as differently regulated psychological therapeutic practices (where in some cases the therapeutic practice is CP), are the norm. We have found this to be significant in people’s experiences.

Deep rooted bias, homophobia, and prejudice can lead to a culture that encourages suppression and/ or direct CP. Sometimes this may not be intended, and sometimes this is with wilful intention. According to Ogunmuyiwa³⁵, the 'norm' within some black communities and black culture and / or some minority faith communities, to be anti-LGBT+, and to use derogatory language or messaging around these identities and orientations, can ‘pull’ some individuals towards CP. He also believes that as cultural and/or religious identity may be more vital to an individual than their LGBT+ identity, they may also be pulled towards these practices. Ogunmuyiwa describes the ‘push’ (anti-LGBT+ rhetoric ‘by people of influence within communities,’ coercion, force, violence and intentional suppression or aim to change someone else) and the ‘pull’ (the reasons and circumstances in which individuals may feel themselves pulled towards consenting to or seeking out these practices) to distinguish how religion and culture factor into conversion practices. Ogunmuyiwa states that survivors have sometimes self-referred to

³⁴ Siraj, A. (2009) ‘The construction of the homosexual ‘other’ by British Muslim heterosexuals’. *Cont Islam* 3, 41–57. [The construction of the homosexual ‘other’ by British Muslim heterosexuals | SpringerLink](#).

³⁵ Ogunmuyiwa (2022) Banning Conversion Practices in Ethnic Minority Communities: Project Summary.

conversion practices, because of recommendations from trusted sources and networks, and because of a lack of alternatives ('push').

When we spoke with Asma, an English, non-binary, queer, intersex person from South Asian heritage, they highlighted the subtle and complex forms that conversion practices can take. They made clear that sometimes such implicit forms of conversion practices can be harder to address because they are harder to pinpoint. Sometimes conversion, by way of suppression and/ or coercing someone into suppressing their own identity is equally as powerful. Many of the stakeholders we spoke to mentioned this –they seemingly 'consented' to suppressing their own identity, or engaging with acts of conversion, due to consistently receiving the message that they are wrong to be whom they are, or to act upon desires.

Asma explained that if a 'circle of loved ones rejects you' from a young age it can have a lifelong impact. They also made clear that much like in instances of domestic abuse, leaving is not always an easy option: they believe this is due to strong emotional connections with family, culture, and security. Asma noted that cultural and religious heritage are really important, and that it is not easy or necessarily desired to turn one's back on many aspects of who they are, including feelings of connection and peace in their religion. They believe that "this is why people go back," and equally how perpetrators can manipulate LGBT+ people into suppressing who they are. This struggle with manipulation and suppression is damaging to an individual's sense of self and can bring a sense of shame, especially when others within the community speak about who you are in a judgemental manner.

In Rehman's work³⁶, a participant provides a similar summary of coming out and what one might envisage upon this disclosure to family when within the POC community and / or of minority ethnic faith. Using further theory, Rehman states that within these communities there is a collectivist cultural orientation [unlike the individualist traditional Western orientation] – this means that "the family is integral to identity".³⁷ – "Thus,

³⁶ Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) 'Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK'. Pg 09.

[Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\).](#)

³⁷ Fouad et al., 2008; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002 in Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) 'Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK'. [Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\).](#)

fear of losing one's family can preclude coming out."³⁸. It may also lead to suppression and seeking out conversion practices.

According to Sarbat Sikhs, there is a cultural fear of rejection amongst Sikh and South Asian LGBT+ people – this fear of rejection encompasses a fear of losing both one's faith and one's family. It is suggested that this fear may be greater due to the significance of family and faith support in one's life. Practices most commonly reflect this suppression. The fear of having no support outside of the family and faith setting is repeated by many, and the reality is that there is little culturally competent support elsewhere in Scotland. Some of the fear mentioned here is of not only rejection, but of bringing dishonour to one's family, alongside a fear of honour abuse, abduction and of forced marriage.

Heteronormativity is likely and often the accepted norm within south Asian communities, and gender roles are clearly defined and established - diversion from these norms comes with the threat of complete isolation and having to 'cope on one's own' (perceived) and no longer be a part of family/faith and therefore no longer feel oneself. Faith is a very large part of the self and one's sense of self within the family and the world.

The 'push' and 'pull' are often entwined - as Ogunmuyiwa³⁹ states. For many people, the separation of self, faith, and culture is an impossibility. We also heard this from Sarbat Sikhs - people cannot separate their faith from who they are, so often seek to suppress their sexual orientation and / or gender identity in order to remain safe within their family / faith support structures. We heard from Sarbat Sikhs that suppression was the norm for people who have a sexual orientation or gender identity that differs from the cis-heteronormative.

Some individuals self-monitor their behaviours around friends, family, and family acquaintances. For one of Fry et al's⁴⁰ participants fear compounded this and increased her stress. This was because she had been told by her parents that if the community or family found out, they would treat her badly. Her family also told her that if her extended family in India found out that she was a lesbian, they would 'have heart

³⁸ Jaspal, 2018 in Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) 'Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK'.

[Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\)](https://www.brighton.ac.uk/~jfish/perspectives_of_minority_stress_rehman_jaspal_fish.pdf).

³⁹ Ogunmuyiwa (2022) 'Banning Conversion Practices in Ethnic Minority Communities: Project Summary'.

⁴⁰ Fry, Munro and Smith et al (2020) 'Intersectionality and South Asian Non-Normative Sexualities: The case of South Asian lesbians and bisexual women in the United Kingdom'. Pg 08.

attacks and die,” and although she knows that this is irrational, she believes that this may be true⁴¹, which has an impact on her psyche. This person feels stress because she has hidden her relationship for a long time and feels the pressure to get married to a man and have children. Of interest here is Runnymede’s⁴² finding that;

“While the theoretical distinction of choice and consent between forced and arranged marriage is well known, the reality of it is that young people found it extremely hard to identify where emotional pressure was “force””.

Runnymede also found that a factor here that may pull individuals towards arranged or forced marriage (as a form of supposedly consensual suppression or conversion in this case) is that within communities of colour and minority ethnic faith communities there is a culture of respect for one’s elders that is powerful enough for younger people not to challenge this practice - this was “particularly so with young women who were more likely to perceive their parent’s motives as benign which could be an additional factor in their susceptibility to emotional pressure.”⁴³ According to Jaspal⁴⁴, echoing Runnymede, young people within south Asian communities “are often reminded of their religious and cultural obligation to get married.” If someone violates cultural norms and expectations here, this can often end in negative interpersonal relationships and being viewed as “abnormal” and “sinful.”⁴⁵ This pressure can and does have effect on psychological and emotional wellbeing.

⁴¹ Fry, Munro and Smith et al (2020) ‘Intersectionality and South Asian Non-Normative Sexualities: The case of South Asian lesbians and bisexual women in the United Kingdom’. Pg 08.

⁴² Heather Harvey (2014) ‘Forced marriage: At the intersection of risk, identity and policy’. [The Runnymede Trust | Forced marriage: At the intersection of risk, identity and policy.](#)

⁴³ Heather Harvey (2014) ‘Forced marriage: At the intersection of risk, identity and policy’. [The Runnymede Trust | Forced marriage: At the intersection of risk, identity and policy.](#)

⁴⁴ Jaspal in Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) ‘Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK’. Pg 06. [Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\).](#)

⁴⁵ Jaspal and Siraj in Siraj, A. (2011) ‘Isolated, invisible and in the closet: The life story of Scottish Muslim lesbians’. Journal of Lesbian Studies, 15(1), 99–121. [Isolated, Invisible, and in the Closet: The Life Story of a Scottish Muslim Lesbian: Journal of Lesbian Studies: Vol 15, No 1 \(tandfonline.com\)](#) and Herek, 2004 in Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) ‘Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK’. [Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\).](#)

Reconciliation of identity and religious identity

We heard from Sarbat Sikhs that “family, religion and life are one within a person, they are indistinguishable” and to attempt to separate these entities would have profound existential effect on any given individual. Where it is often the case in Western/ Christian culture that one’s life and faith institution may be separate enough to allow distinct perspectives, this may not be the case within minority faith communities.

Asma talked to us about how hard it could be going home for family and religious occasions. They described going home for Eid, and how their parents had noticed that their hair was short when they took off their headscarf, and that their parents had commented on this negatively. Asma stated that “when it’s family it really gets to you”, “when people all stare at you”, noting the serious impact that this can have on young people particularly, even more so when they “have fears that they will be ex-communicated or isolated.”

We heard from Sarbat Sikhs, and from Shakti Women’s Aid, that LGBT+ people of minority faith often struggle to reconcile their sexual orientation and/ or gender identity with their religious identity, or with their families’ sense of who they ought to be and how they ought to live their lives. This was also a common theme within the literature:

“British Pakistani lesbians precariously inhabit a sociocultural environment that constrains the expression of female sexuality. Women who oppose and contravene heteronormative values and ideals unsettle comfortable assumptions of heterosexuality. Being in the closet keeps lesbians isolated and marginalised from their ethnic and cultural communities. [...] Being in the closet is a source of considerable conflict, strain and anxiety, which has an impact on the women’s readiness to embrace individual choice, freedom and desire”.⁴⁶

And;

“Muslim women’s self-acceptance of their sexuality necessitates an inevitable distancing from their heterosexual family, religion, and community. Their narratives also

⁴⁶ Siraj, A. (2017) ‘British Pakistani lesbians existing within the confines of the closet.’ Pg 08. [British Pakistani lesbians existing within the confines of the closet: Culture, Health & Sexuality: Vol 20, No 1 \(tandfonline.com\)](https://doi.org/10.1080/17445019.2017.1348888).

foreground their marginality and exclusion because of their failure to conform to cultural, traditional, familial, and religious customs”.⁴⁷

Within Fry et al’s⁴⁸ work they cited Hajra. She spoke about how she negotiates her seemingly conflictual identities as an Indian woman, as an English woman, and as a lesbian:

“It’s hard sometimes to just be gay and Asian because you, even though I live within the culture, I live on the margins of the culture[...] I think [what] has made me more acceptable is because I am not Westernised [...] I think that’s what makes me acceptable because my dad saw that she still speaks the language perfectly, she still wants to go to India erm, she wants to have an Indian life”.⁴⁹

And they also cited Adeela and her experiences as a gay Indian woman with a Hindu family;

“It really is a double life; I’ve always felt like that [...] I’ve always had to watch where I am, which were the wrong people to know, who in my family knows? With such an extended family it’s difficult actually because there are people that know who I am and I don’t know who they are.[...] I do so say I’m the worst Hindu in the world but I don’t identify as Hindu, I feel, if I ever have to be at a mandir (Hindu temple) for anything religious I feel soooooo uncomfortable, I feel so out of place, I feel so, I feel like a fraud, I feel like I’m not a Hindu, I’m not an Indian, I feel like a complete fraud...”⁵⁰

And in Rehman et al, similar was seen;

⁴⁷ Siraj, A. (2011) ‘Isolated, invisible and in the closet: The life story of Scottish Muslim lesbians’. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 15(1), 99–121, pg 103. [Isolated, Invisible, and in the Closet: The Life Story of a Scottish Muslim Lesbian: Journal of Lesbian Studies: Vol 15, No 1 \(tandfonline.com\)](#).

⁴⁸ Fry, Munro and Smith et al (2020) ‘Intersectionality and South Asian Non-Normative Sexualities: The case of South Asian lesbians and bisexual women in the United Kingdom’. Pg 05.

⁴⁹ Hajra in Fry, Munro and Smith et al (2020) ‘Intersectionality and South Asian Non-Normative Sexualities: The case of South Asian lesbians and bisexual women in the United Kingdom’. Pg 05.

⁵⁰ Adeela in Fry, Munro and Smith et al (2020) ‘Intersectionality and South Asian Non-Normative Sexualities: The case of South Asian lesbians and bisexual women in the United Kingdom’. Pg 07.

“I used to feel very uncomfortable going to the Sikh temple. I used to feel I was wrong and what I was feeling and how I was behaving was not in line with the religion”.⁵¹

And;

“The majority of Pakistani people are Muslim and their faith, the family or themselves are not able to resolve their sexual orientation with their religion - their faith”.⁵²

Tehara echoes these comments and highlights previous studies telling the same story. He states that south Asian LGBTQ+ people often feel this tension, what is referred to as “acculturation”⁵³ – it is the case that this kind of conflict is a factor in minority stress.⁵⁴ Fry et al also found that their participants experienced a feeling of disconnect between their ethnicity and family religion and being LGBTQ+, and how this led to a lacking feelings of connectedness, social Isolation and invisibility.⁵⁵

Diverse Conversion Practices and family: Honour, dishonour, abuse and shame

We heard of diverse forms of conversion practice in our stakeholder engagement. Shakti Women's Aid informed us that there are issues of violence in some Mosques, Hindu temples and Sikh Gurdwaras. These religious institutions do not have central regulation, nor are they governed by any central body in the UK, they are often guided by individuals, and most are independent. They are their own entities (each following diverse schools of religious thought). Some of these institutions

⁵¹ Harjit in in Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) ‘Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK’. Pg 08.

[Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\).](#)

⁵² Clare in Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) ‘Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK’. Pg 08.

[Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\).](#)

⁵³ Jaspreet Singh Tehara (2020) ‘British South Asian and bisexual an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the male perspective.’ Pg 30. [British South Asian and Bisexual.pdf \(roehampton.ac.uk\).](#) and Dhillon and Ubhi in Jaspreet Singh Tehara (2020) ‘British South Asian and bisexual an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the male perspective.’ [British South Asian and Bisexual.pdf \(roehampton.ac.uk\).](#)

⁵⁴ Bryant-Waugh and Lask, 1991; Farver, Narang and Bhada, 2002; Singh and Clarke, 2006 all in Jaspreet Singh Tehara (2020) ‘British South Asian and bisexual an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the male perspective.’ [British South Asian and Bisexual.pdf \(roehampton.ac.uk\).](#)

⁵⁵ Fry, Munro and Smith et al (2020) ‘Intersectionality and South Asian Non-Normative Sexualities: The case of South Asian lesbians and bisexual women in the United Kingdom’. Pg 12.

are set up following ideologies analogous with CP. This means that in some religious institutions, CP can happen in an unorganised setting, for example in a small temple or in a home setting. Similar to practices carried out in Christian denomination faith settings, these will potentially go unchallenged or encouraged.

The types of practices carried out according to stakeholders at Shakti Women's Aid include water boarding, forced marriage, beatings, hitting, burning, 'black magic,' corrective rape, isolation, abduction (done under the guise of spiritual practice) and forced fasting. We heard at the Equalities Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee (EHRCJC) oral evidence sessions from a Muslim queer man who was instructed to fast as a form of CP. According to Shakti, fasting is a common practice as it is linked to faith but not clear in scripture, and a lot of these practices, such as exorcism, are not dissimilar to what happens within the Christian faith, but they are more hidden from wider public view, due to the differing structures.

The Naz and Matt Foundation made very clear that a significant issue for LGBT+ people is forced marriage as a form of conversion practice: They said that many South Asian Muslim LGBT+ people have their sexual orientation and / or gender identity suppressed - through forced marriage in a bid to suppress or conceal the true self. They made clear that it is imperative to consider this practice as by the time someone is going through a forced marriage, an individual has potentially withstood significant trauma, and at this point is at high risk of suicidality. Here the weight of dishonour is also felt.

The practices that we heard the most about from people of colour and those of minority ethnic faith involved honour.

According to the Honour Abuse Research Matrix (HARM⁵⁶), honour cultures are patriarchal and follow strict ideas of gender roles. Men and women have distinct roles, to be tough and dominant or demonstrate purity, modesty, and obedience. Roles are perpetuated and enforced by families and wider community to protect the families' social image.⁵⁷ Honour based violence is carried out in national and migrant communities "when it is perceived that sexually 'improper' behaviour has

⁵⁶ Honor Abuse Research Matrix (HARM) (2018) 'Honour' abuse: the experience of South Asians who identify as LGBT in North West England. [20996 LGBT Honour Report - Final \(2018\).pdf \(uclan.ac.uk\)](#).

⁵⁷ Honor Abuse Research Matrix (HARM) (2018) 'Honour' abuse: the experience of South Asians who identify as LGBT in North West England. [20996 LGBT Honour Report - Final \(2018\).pdf \(uclan.ac.uk\)](#).

brought sharam”⁵⁸ on an individual’s family or community.⁵⁹ Men and women are both at risk of this practice, as would be non-binary people (as evidenced in our stakeholder engagement), though HARM does not address this.

The Naz and Matt Foundation told us that many LGBT+ South Asian Muslim people have their sexual orientation and / or gender identity suppressed with the threat of bringing dishonour on their family and/ or honour based violence. We also heard from both Sarbat Sikhs and Shakti Women's Aid that fear of bringing dishonour on one’s family was significant. There is a fear of bringing dishonour on one’s family by being LGBT+, but also bringing dishonour by shaming or ruining the life of someone who one may be forced to marry, and also fear of bringing dishonour should one report a family member or religious leader for practicing conversion. And, according to both the Naz and Matt Foundation and Sarbat Sikhs, the majority of South Asian LGBT+ Muslim and Sikh people will experience CP outside of religious establishments - in the home, at the hands of family. Where there is little separation between domestic and faith settings this poses important issues for consideration.

The HARM⁶⁰ project highlights the significance of this threat to LGBT+ people in the UK. They refer to these honour-based practices (in this case, CP) as “homonegative ‘honour’ based victimisation” - they state that LGBT+ people are reportedly at risk of “victimization from their immediate and extended family members in South Asian diasporic populations.”⁶¹ Within this piece of work, they outline the potential figures and scale of this problem in the UK for LGBT+ people;

“Honour abuse has been reported across many South Asian populations, both domestically (in countries of origin) and internationally, including diasporic communities in England [...]
As sources indicate the average number of ‘honour’ killings, solely for Pakistan, may be more than 10,000 per year, it is perhaps unsurprising that LGBT people are openly reported to be at risk of victimization from their immediate and extended

⁵⁸ Embarrassment or shame.

⁵⁹ Honor Abuse Research Matrix (HARM) (2018) ‘Honour’ abuse: the experience of South Asians who identify as LGBT in North West England. Pg 5. [20996 LGBT Honour Report - Final \(2018\).pdf \(uclan.ac.uk\)](#).

⁶⁰ Honor Abuse Research Matrix (HARM) (2018) ‘Honour’ abuse: the experience of South Asians who identify as LGBT in North West England. [20996 LGBT Honour Report - Final \(2018\).pdf \(uclan.ac.uk\)](#).

⁶¹ Honor Abuse Research Matrix (HARM) (2018) ‘Honour’ abuse: the experience of South Asians who identify as LGBT in North West England. Pg 05. [20996 LGBT Honour Report - Final \(2018\).pdf \(uclan.ac.uk\)](#).

family members in South Asian diasporic populations. These crimes are officially acknowledged by the United Nations [...]”⁶²

“LGBT persons often reveal exposure to physical and sexual violence, extended periods of detention, medical abuse, threat of execution and honour killing”.⁶³

When speaking with us, Asma discussed honour and how, sometimes others (outwith the immediate family unit) in a community can feel compelled to act on someone’s behalf to ‘fix’ the problem of someone being LGBT+. This suggests, as we had heard from Sarbat Sikhs, that there is often not one perpetrator but perhaps many actors contributing to the suppression of someone’s identity, using shame, negativity, and potentially, threat. Asma described the power of the “continued threat of violence,” stating that honour abuse as a form of CP is often couched in manipulation - a way of controlling people with fear from early childhood. Asma explained that the impact of this is that thoughts and beliefs become embedded and become hard to overcome.

Asma exemplified this by discussing forced marriage and honour. They stated that a ‘forced marriage’ may not seem forced if a woman has been told repeatedly, from a young age, that this is the norm. Asma feels that some honour-based practices, including forced marriage as a form of CP, are “eroding people’s right to choose” when they are young through subtle practices extended over a long period of time. They say that this means that by the time an individual reaches adulthood they are not being ‘forced’ to do something because they have already been indoctrinated into this way of thinking. This is very important to consider when considering coercion and consent with regards to conversion practices.

It is important to also consider that, for some people, practices are not ‘subtle;’

“[P]eople I knew were marrying women even though they were gay - or they were killing themselves...I feared for my life. I felt I

⁶² Honor Abuse Research Matrix (HARM) (2018) ‘Honour’ abuse: the experience of South Asians who identify as LGBT in North West England. Pgs 04-05. [20996 LGBT Honour Report - Final \(2018\).pdf \(uclan.ac.uk\)](#).

⁶³ UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2008 in Honor Abuse Research Matrix (HARM) (2018) ‘Honour’ abuse: the experience of South Asians who identify as LGBT in North West England. [20996 LGBT Honour Report - Final \(2018\).pdf \(uclan.ac.uk\)](#).

could be killed... I would be disowned, kicked out of the house and forced to marry a woman, definitely" [...]

this interviewee disclosed that once the news of his homosexuality spread to his wider community, he was warned that he would be punished for dishonouring both his family and his culture; he was threatened with the humiliation of being violated by an electric hand drill".⁶⁴

HARM's⁶⁵ findings "indicate that extensive work needs to be undertaken to improve awareness of the difficulties faced by South Asian LGBT [people] at risk of 'honour' abuse and violence in the UK." There are considerable potential issues to consider in terms of reporting CP. HARM also found that few LGBT+ people reported incidents to the police, people were reluctant to report honour based abuse, this may be similar to issues in reporting conversion practices. When participants provided opinions on this to the HARM research team, they focussed on a need for more awareness of LGBT+ issues in places of worship, "fear of damaging family reputations and/or being outed within their community [...] lack of police resources to make reporters safe, perceived lack of support, trust or racism from the police. [...]"⁶⁶

Institutional racism and underrepresentation in policy development

Ogunmuyiwa⁶⁷ states that ethnic minority communities tend to be underrepresented in responses to government consultations and design of policy and legislation. He also states that there is an underrepresentation of people from ethnic and religious minorities in the quantitative data collected in the UK. He highlights that though the UK Government Equalities Office National LGBT Survey in 2018 showed an increased risk of conversion practices in ethnic minority communities, there was still an underrepresentation of these communities in the overall study population. Ogunmuyiwa also highlights that in a study with

⁶⁴ BBC News night programme on honour based violence cited in Honor Abuse Research Matrix (HARM) (2018) 'Honour' abuse: the experience of South Asians who identify as LGBT in North West England. [20996 LGBT Honour Report - Final \(2018\).pdf \(uclan.ac.uk\)](#).

⁶⁵ Honor Abuse Research Matrix (HARM) (2018) 'Honour' abuse: the experience of South Asians who identify as LGBT in North West England. Pg 03. [20996 LGBT Honour Report - Final \(2018\).pdf \(uclan.ac.uk\)](#).

⁶⁶ Honor Abuse Research Matrix (HARM) (2018) 'Honour' abuse: the experience of South Asians who identify as LGBT in North West England. Pg 13. [20996 LGBT Honour Report - Final \(2018\).pdf \(uclan.ac.uk\)](#).

⁶⁷ Ogunmuyiwa (2022) 'Banning Conversion Practices in Ethnic Minority Communities: Project Summary'.

over 30 participants (by Jowet et al) on conversion practices, there were only 2 non-white people and there were no Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh participants. He also highlights that the 2021 UK Black Pride Survey Report, in which UK Black Pride, Stonewall, and NYX focused on the wider factors about LGBTQI+ visibility and acceptance in home communities and LGBTQI+ spaces for ethnic minorities, did not address conversion practices within black and minority ethnic faith communities.

Ogunmuyiwa, as Equality Network has, also highlights the lack of representation within the EHRCJC written and oral responses at evidence sessions of non-white and / or non-Christian experiences of CP. We have highlighted the lack of representation heard in survivor sessions, and indeed in the work of the EAG - an issue we have tried to somewhat, though not nearly significantly enough, remedy. It is imperative that this work continues beyond the drafting of the legislative Bill. A lack of intersectional LGBT+ representation more generally is problematic. Underrepresentation within the EAG's work threatens comprehensive legislation that considers and protects all within the LGBT+ community in Scotland. Shakti Women's Aid told us;

We are encountering the same issue as other Bills, where the conversations are only beginning at the concluding stages of a Bill being introduced, without BME people properly shaping this or being represented. This can be compared with the Forced Marriage Bill, which was ineffective because there was no real support and investment to make it work. There needs to be money and long-term investment for legislation to work – in the Forced Marriage Bill hardly any cases have actually been brought to the courts because of this oversight. It is important to understand support as long-term financial investment and capacity building of grassroots BME organisations/groups.

A lack of consideration in wider LGBT+ community engagement, a lack of consideration within policy development, and a lack of representation in stakeholder engagement, is not unheard of for people of colour and people within minority ethnic faith communities. But this lack of representation in this discourse is not the only problem, it has much bigger complications in relation to this work that may cause further harm if not considered properly. Without full and significant engagement with communities of colour and minority ethnic faith communities on how criminal measures to end CP will be shaped and without allowing for

flexible modes of reporting and outcome, for example within civil orders and community support, it is strongly felt by stakeholders that LGBT+ people of colour and people within minority ethnic faith communities may be subject to further risk and harm. This is primarily due to three things:

- 1) A driving of practice further underground for fear of criminalisation – meaning nothing improves and LGBT+ people of colour and those from minority ethnic faiths are at further risk as no civil communication has taken place and there are no culturally safe modes of engaging with the Bill / reporting
- 2) A fear of putting one's family or community at risk of criminalisation without scope for civil measures that understand (and can work *with*) your community
- 3) A fear of being wrongfully targeted and criminalised by a police force that still has issues with institutional racism and prejudice.

We have heard from The House of Rainbow, Sarbat Sikhs and The Naz and Matt Foundation that without proper consideration of the impact of criminal measures upon minority ethnic faith communities and communities of colour, there will be unintended consequences, including risks to victims and survivors of CP within the LGBT+ community. These communities will potentially be put at further risk due to historically established prejudice and discrimination within the criminal justice system. There are legitimate concerns and feelings of apprehension around reporting whilst this remains the case. For this reason, as has been said within the EAG, considerable work will be required within communities to understand these risks, to safeguard, and to provide awareness and understanding about the legislative measures and support available, as well as multiple pathways to seek reparation and support, where the potential victim or survivor has full autonomy.

Shakti Women's Aid informed us that there is a general concern around criminalisation, there were similar concerns when the legislation on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Forced Marriage were developed. Shakti believe that though FGM has been criminalised in some form since the 1980s, this has made no difference to the practice (or the victims) and this is because communities have not been worked with properly and ways in which to engage with reporting were not appropriate for diverse communities (for the reasons outlined above).

Shakti believes that legislation should allow for confidential engagement and discretion, and it needs not to criminalise in the first instance:

Criminal convictions are so hard to come by in other places like with sexual violence and forced marriage, the civil scheme is the real saviour in that people can actually engage with it. Criminalisation in fact often works against protecting people from harm. For example, when Forced Marriage legislation came in, the numbers Shakti was dealing with in relation to this jumped substantially. The balance of proof needed in the civil scheme to protect someone from harm is much less and that makes it more effective. [...] Where we can look to the Forced Marriage legislation as useful and helpful is in how it defines perpetrators within the civil scheme (NOT the criminalisation side).

Ogunmuyiwa⁶⁸ suggests that criminal sanctions may force victims to choose between their community, their culture, their religious identity and their sexuality and / or gender identity. This means that some minority groups will not be able to engage with the criminal justice system.

When discussing Forced Marriage legislation, Runnymede⁶⁹ says that opponents of criminalisation were wary of the motives of government and their eagerness to legislate. We have found that some stakeholders have similar concerns. Opponents within the Runnymede piece state that criminalisation measures within the case of Forced Marriage legislation “would have disproportionate impact on certain segments of the population who already may feel scrutinised, feared, stereotyped and marginalised.” We heard the same from some stakeholders in relation to CP legislation. We hope that there can be significant consideration of this when considering both the legislative and civil measures and that work within communities will continue beyond legislative drafting.

Barriers, need for culturally competent support, and capacity building

Asma previously worked in sexual health. During that time they had several people come to them with different stories of forms of conversion

⁶⁸ Ogunmuyiwa (2022) ‘Banning Conversion Practices in Ethnic Minority Communities: Project Summary’.

⁶⁹ Heather Harvey (2014) ‘Forced marriage: At the intersection of risk, identity and policy’. [The Runnymede Trust | Forced marriage: At the intersection of risk, identity and policy.](#)

practices. Asma spoke of one example of a Christian man of Indian heritage who came to them as a patient for eight years. While he came for sexual health reasons, he was able to open up about his struggles with himself being a gay man. His wife had found out about this and told ministers and people within his community. She had also made him feel guilty about his children and what effect he might have on them. Feelings of shame, and that his community and family would never accept him, led him to suicidal ideation. Asma explained that this example highlights the different routes at which people arrive at seeking support. They may not reach out to mainstream or specialist support services targeted at these issues because they may have fears about being outed, or not being listened to/accepted. People are looking for a trusted place and face, and Asma was able to be this for this man, through just listening and holding the space for him to talk about what he was facing. Asma explained that having someone South Asian to talk to made a big difference to this man, and that this needed to be considered in legislation - having culturally competent services where people feel safe and comfortable is imperative to successful legislation and civil measures that will not only end CP but allow people to seek support and healing.

It is particularly important that culturally competent services are available locally. Asma explained that part of the reason this man had come to them was convenience – many advocacy and charity services are national or based in big cities. This is an issue across the board for LGBT+ competent services. It is a further issue finding LGBT+ competent services that are also intersectional. Shakti Women's Aid also highlighted this significant issue. They said that there needs to be understanding that many accredited counsellors and services do not have sensitivities around both LGBTI+ identities and people of colour, particularly the biggest (mainstream) bodies. Very few culturally competent services could or do cater to intersectionally marginalised LGBT+ people of faith. Considering barriers to seeking support including fears of rejection, loss of family, loss of faith, ostracisation, and harm, this is problematic.

Ogunmuyiwa⁷⁰ found that LGBT+ spaces were not always able to provide this support either:

⁷⁰ Ogunmuyiwa (2022) 'Banning Conversion Practices in Ethnic Minority Communities: Project Summary'.

“Only 25% of the UK Black Pride survey respondents found their local LGBTQI+ spaces welcoming to ethnic minority people compared with 67% in the national LGBT survey”

“49% of respondents in the UK Black Pride survey were not aware of LGBTQI+ spaces in their local area”.

There is another barrier seen when we consider some cultural beliefs around mental illness and reaching out for mental health support within differing communities. For example, Choudhury et al⁷¹ conclude that even when LGBT+ South Asian individuals “have access to various health services, cultural norms that marginalize LGBTIQ identities deter many of them from using these services.” HARM⁷² found that comments in their own research related to more support being needed within South Asian communities for coming out and mental health concerns.

Rehman et al note that there are no services in the statutory sectors “which focus exclusively on the mental health of BAME LGB people in the UK but there are in the voluntary sector.”⁷³ As we also found within this engagement, services for POC and minority ethnic LGBT+ communities are “scarce and are often provided by informal non-profit organisations led by volunteers and community members.”⁷⁴

The scope of this, and the significant health inequalities of POC and minority ethnic LGBT+ people, cannot be discussed in full here, but this must be considered.

We heard from some that people seek support within other faith denominations - this is due to the importance of spirituality to individuals. For example, some Muslim and Sikh people may turn to LGBT+ inclusive 'all religions and none' spaces, or inclusive Christian spaces.

⁷¹ Choudhury, P. P., Badhan, N. S., Chand, J., Chhugani, S., Choksey, R. Husainy, S., Lui, C., & Wat, E. C. (2009). 'Community alienation and its impact on help-seeking behaviour among LGBTIQ South Asians in Southern California'. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*, 21(2–3), 247–266. Abstract. [Community Alienation and its Impact on Help-seeking Behavior Among LGBTIQ South Asians in Southern California: Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services: Vol 21, No 2-3 \(tandfonline.com\)](#).

⁷² Honor Abuse Research Matrix (HARM) (2018) 'Honour' abuse: the experience of South Asians who identify as LGBT in North West England. Pg 13. [20996 LGBT Honour Report - Final \(2018\).pdf \(uclan.ac.uk\)](#).

⁷³ Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) 'Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK'. Pg 02. [Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\)](#).

⁷⁴ Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) 'Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK'. Pg 02. [Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\)](#).

This demonstrates the need for safe supportive spaces that allow for one's diverse faith and LGBT+ orientation or identity.

We heard from Sarbat Sikhs that capacity building in the bid for more widely available support for potential victims and survivors is imperative. There is a severe lack of capacity, structures and funding to support groups who support people of colour and minority groups of people. We have seen that all organisations supporting and advocating for LGBT+ people of colour and people of minority ethnic faith that we have engaged with for this work are either not funded, or underfunded - this will need attention as part of any successful civil scheme to end CP and support survivors.

Services and support to report and heal from CP and other forms of discrimination, violence and prejudice should;

“Understand the social, cultural and religious contexts in which their clients are embedded, as the norms, values and representations associated with these contexts will shape both their experiences and the coping strategies they utilise.”⁷⁵

Based on this short report and work with stakeholders we make our recommendations to the EAG.

⁷⁵ Rehman, Jaspal and Fish (in press) 'Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People in the UK'. Pg 14.
[Service Provider Perspectives of Minority Stress Rehman Jaspal Fish.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\)](#).



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