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Defending biblical truth

The claim that someone's 'true gender' can be different to their biological sex has taken root in many areas of society.

We give thanks to God that the Province has now followed the rest of the UK in banning puberty blockers for gender-confused children. Though initially temporary, this ban is an important step in the battle against this dangerously misleading ideology.

However, renewed pressure on free speech is concerning.

The Prime Minister is said to be reconsidering censorship of online

content deemed 'legal but harmful', after it was dropped in 2022 following a lengthy CI campaign.

His pledge to ban so-called conversion therapy puts those who faithfully preach the Gospel at risk of being turned into criminals. An MLA has even called for Christian preaching to be banned from a public space in Londonderry.

It is an important reminder of the need to do all we can to defend the precious religious liberty and freedom of expression we enjoy.

NI bans puberty blockers for gender-confused youngsters

Northern Ireland has followed the rest of the UK in introducing a temporary ban on puberty blockers for gender-confused children.

The emergency legislation protects under-18s from obtaining the drugs via private prescriptions from Britain or Europe. It was set to expire on 3 September but has been extended until 26 November, and now includes Northern Ireland.

Health Minister Mike Nesbitt announced that, pending "a long-term solution" informed

by UK clinical trials, Northern Ireland "will cease to be a potential back door" to access puberty blockers.

The Department of Health explained that the decision to close the loophole was made in light of the Cass Review's findings.

It noted the Review's conclusion: "because of the limited evidence, and potential risks to patient safety with regards neurocognitive development, psychosexual development and longer-term bone health, these medicines



should only be offered for this purpose under a research protocol".

Writing ahead of the announcement, former First Minister Arlene Foster highlighted boasts by notorious pro-trans activist Susie Green that she planned to evade Britain's ban by importing puberty

blockers via Northern Ireland.

Puberty blockers are only available to NHS patients in Northern Ireland who started the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Gender Identity Service endocrine pathway before March 2020.

MLAs urge Stormont to tackle widespread harms of gambling

A group of MLAs has called for a complete overhaul of legislation in Northern Ireland to tackle the widespread harms of gambling.

Stormont's All Party Group (APG) on Reducing Harm Related to Gambling made 57 recommendations in a report considering the Betting, Gaming Lotteries and Amusements (NI) Order 1985, which is being updated by the Assembly.

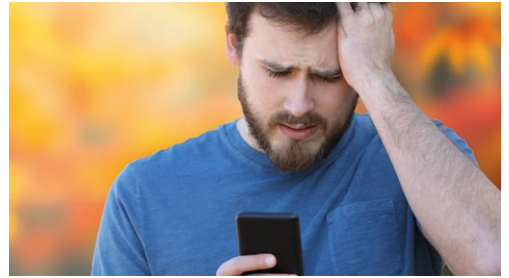
The APG called for the creation of an independent regulator "tasked with enforcing gambling laws" and said

that online gambling sites should be required by law "to have robust age verification checks to protect children".

It also recommended a restriction on "gambling advertising in some form", including a ban on TV gambling adverts between 5.30am and 9pm.

The Christian Institute has called on the Westminster Government to prioritise gambling reform for the sake of those exploited by betting companies.

In a letter to Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy, the Institute's Ciarán



"The time to act is now."

CIARÁN KELLY,
DIRECTOR

Kelly warned: "There is too much of the 'Wild West' about current gambling laws. The time to act is now."

In response, the Minister for Gambling, Baroness Twycross, told the Institute the Government "recognises the impact harmful gambling can have", and is "committed to strengthening the protections for those at risk".

Institute urges PM not to cave in to demands for free speech restrictions

The Christian Institute has urged the Prime Minister not to respond to this summer's public disorder by imposing draconian restrictions on free speech.

While it said the Government must examine the root

causes and prosecute the perpetrators of the "shocking scenes of violence", the CI also warned that ministers should not be drawn into a knee-jerk reaction.

The Prime Minister has said he does not

wish to pass new legislation "every time there is a challenge", but he is under pressure to take action.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan told the Government to re-examine the Online Safety Act, claiming

it was "not fit for purpose". However, online threats are already illegal and one woman was recently convicted for sending online messages calling for a mosque to be blown up.

The Institute's Simon Calvert said the Government must not reintroduce restrictions on content deemed 'legal but harmful' to adults, saying it could lead to "damaging limitations on legitimate debate".



GB poll: 'Assisted suicide is unsafe'

More than four in ten British adults who back assisted suicide have serious doubts about its safety, a recent poll has revealed.

According to a survey of 2,001 adults by Whitestone Insight, half also agreed that removing end-of-life protections would fundamentally change the doctor-patient relationship.

Sir Keir Starmer has pledged to allow parliamentary time for a Private Member's Bill to legalise the practice.



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CI: 'Conversion therapy law threatens innocent people'

The Christian Institute has warned that the Prime Minister's pledge to ban so-called conversion therapy threatens gospel freedom.

Westminster is set to bring forward a draft Bill on banning 'conversion practices'. LGBT activists are pushing for it to include prayer, preaching and pastoral conversations that affirm biblical sexual ethics and defend the reality of biological sex.

Deputy Director Simon Calvert stated: "The Christian Institute has obtained legal

advice from leading King's Counsel on every attempt to legislate for conversion therapy in the UK and every time those KCs have advised that there are multiple risks to the human rights of innocent parents, pastors and professionals."

In the Republic of Ireland, Equalities Minister Roderic O'Gorman has admitted that the complexities of such a ban have stalled plans to legislate on the issue before the next election.

In 2023, an official study found little or no evidence of conversion therapy in Ireland.



MLA tries to ban open-air services in Londonderry

A Londonderry MLA has described open-air church services as 'a public nuisance' and called for them to be banned at the city's popular Ebrington Square.

The SDLP's Sinéad McLaughlin

accused the Stormont Executive of 'mismanagement' for allowing a church to host open-air services in the square.

She claimed that granting permission for it to be used by "religious preachers" risked

totally undermining it as "an inclusive and shared space".

However, fellow MLA Gary Middleton responded that Ebrington Square should remain "open to all" as a "genuine shared and inclusive space".

He added that the church - Faughan Reformed Presbyterian - has "a track record of doing things in a respectful way".



PSNI admits to radical trans ideology training for officers

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has been subjecting staff to training steeped in transgender ideology, it has been revealed.

Course material handed over to the Belfast News Letter after a nine-month wrangle showed that officers were encouraged by trans-activist group Cara-Friend to embrace disputed ideas and parrot trans language.

Cara-Friend told PSNI officers that 'sex' is "assigned at birth", "gender is a social construct" and children as young as three can be transgender. The training also promoted the use of false pronouns and informed attendees that some people described themselves as "xe/xem" and "ve/vir".

A raft of LGBT expressions was also presented to staff, including "agender",



"allosexual" and "greysexual". At the end of the course, staff were encouraged to "challenge queerphobia".

The force informed the News Letter that "112 officers and staff" attended the training,

which formed part of their "continuing personal development".

The newspaper submitted a Freedom of Information request in July 2023, but the PSNI refused to disclose any detail until the matter was escalated to a tribunal.

PSNI made a £500 donation to Cara-Friend for the material. The group receives approximately 60 per cent of its income from the public purse.

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CI appoints new Director

The Christian Institute has appointed Ciarán Kelly as its new Director, following the sudden death of Colin Hart in March.

Mr Kelly, who joined the Institute in 2014, has been promoted to the position on a permanent basis, after stepping in as Acting Director during the four-month recruitment process.

The Institute's Chairman of Trustees, Revd Dr Richard Turnbull, said: "There is no one more suited to lead the Institute for the challenges that lie ahead."

The new Director asked for prayer, and invited all Bible-believing Christians to join with the Institute in "speaking up for what is good and right and true, and contending for the relevance of God's moral law to all people in our own day".



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