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Gay 'conversion therapy' should be outlawed, minister says

A Stormont minister has described gay conversion therapy as "inhuman" and said she is "personally committed" to banning the practice in Northern Ireland.

By Jayne McCormack

BBC News (30.09.2020) - <https://bbc.in/34cO6tK> - Communities Minister Carál Ní Chuilín said it was harmful and must be outlawed.

Earlier this month, she met other Stormont ministers who agreed to take action.

Legislation will need input from the health and justice departments.

In July, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced plans to ban the practice in Great Britain, after a "study" on the issue is completed.

But outlawing it in Northern Ireland would require specific intervention from the executive.

Speaking to BBC News NI's Talkback on Wednesday, Ms Ní Chuilín said her department is overseeing LGBTQ+ policy matters, as part of the executive's sexual orientation strategy.

Ms Ní Chuilín said her youngest brother is gay and had faced difficult experiences growing up.

"But never did anyone try to tell him he wasn't gay," she said.

"This practice is trying to tell you you are broken; I find it appalling and sick."

The minister was unable to provide a timetable as to when legislation could be taken forward but said she was committed to delivering progress as quickly as possible.

Lesbian couple grateful to be 1st to legally wed in Northern Ireland

The women were planning a civil union ceremony if marriage had not passed.

By Tracy E. Gilchrist

Advocate (07.02.2020) - <https://bit.ly/3bnvgD0> - Marriage equality became law in Northern Ireland as of January 13, and Sharni Edwards and Robyn Peoples, who've been

engaged for five years, became the first same-sex couple slated to legally marry there next week, according to the BBC.

While marriage equality has been the law of the land in England, Wales, and Scotland since 2014, but in July 2019, but the United Kingdom's Parliament stepped in following a collapse of Northern Ireland's government and OK'd an amendment to legalize marriage equality and abortion there. The law went into effect in January, which allowed same-sex couples to start registering to marry in time to begin marriages in February.

Peoples, 26, and Edwards, 27, intended to celebrate their love with a civil union ceremony if equal marriage had not passed. Now they are part of LGBTQ history there.

The women will legally wed Tuesday in Carrickfergus, County Antrim.

"We're both nervous but very excited," Peoples told the BBC. "We just can't believe it's happening next week."

The women met in 2014 when Edwards, who is from Brighton, England, was visiting a cousin in Belfast, where she met Peoples at Kremlin nightclub.

"We haven't been separated since. We just clicked," Edwards told Pink News. "You know when you know."

The women became engaged a year later on a trip to Paris to see Ariana Grande. Brandishing a lock with their names engraved on it, Peoples proposed on the "Love Lock" bridge in Paris.

The next year, Edwards created a proposal of her own, spelling out "Will you marry me?" in rose petals.

The women credit the Love Equality campaign with really pushing marriage forward. They were also active in the movement, marching at Belfast Pride and various marriage equality events.

"It is so surreal for me. I still have to pinch myself. I just feel humbled and grateful," Edwards said. "The younger generation need people to look up to, to see it's OK for a woman to love a woman."
