



Op COURAGE – London

Response to the publication of the LGBT+ Veterans' Independent Review 20th July 2023



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Op COURAGE London is welcoming of the UK Government's publication of Lord Etherton's Independent Review¹ into the experiences of LGBT+ veterans who served in the British Armed Forces between 1967 – 2000 during the ban on LGBT+ service personnel, often termed the 'gay ban'.

The landmark review details the pain, distress, and trauma that LGBT+ service personnel and those perceived to be LGBT+ endured, including horrific sexual and physical abuse, homophobic bullying, abusive investigations and medical procedures, forced treatment, including conversion therapy, and dismissal following court martial or administrative discharge. The review acknowledges the long-term impact of the ban on affected veterans, their families and loved ones and the wider community. Op COURAGE London recognise the bravery it took for those who contributed to the review, and for the work of Fighting with Pride and the LGBT+ veteran community in calling for this monumental publication. Today, following an apology to those affected by the ban, the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak described the policies at the time as an "appalling failure of the British state".

The review's publication has the potential to give rise to a range of experiences, and we hope that the report provides those affected by the policies at the time with a sense of beginning to feel heard and validated for the pain caused by such historic hurt. Yet, the report's publication may also give rise to many painful feelings such as loss, betrayal, and injustice. The publication and associated media reporting may also evoke troubling memories and events associated with individuals' service, and what came after, including how people coped with the pain that they endured, and the impact the ban had on their relationships, careers and sense of self and identity.

For some the publication may bring with it a loss of mooring and a feeling of instability. Op COURAGE London is here to help LGBT+ veterans who may need guidance and support at this time, and we acknowledge the psychological impact of the distressing and disturbing experiences endured by LGBT+ veterans serving in the British Armed Forces. We offer assessment, signposting and treatment to veterans living in Greater London and support people struggling with the impact of both combat and non-combat related mental health issues and psychological needs.

Op COURAGE London is proud to stand alongside and support the LGBT+ veteran community. If you or someone you care about is living with the impact of this ban and would like to explore mental health and psychological support, then please contact Op COURAGE London on 0203 317 6818 or veteransservice@candi.nhs.uk or visit <https://www.veteransservicelse.nhs.uk/>. A member of the team will be able to discuss with you the support we offer and the quick and easy way to access help. If you live outside of Greater London, the please visit www.nhs.uk/opcourage for details of your local Op COURAGE or speak with your GP.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1170688/LGBT_Veterans_Independent_Review.pdf