

Written evidence submitted by Mr Michael Dyer-Evans (GRA0037)

I have the privilege to know multiple trans women, men, and non-binary individuals, and whilst their experiences of being trans in the UK naturally differ, two common themes are reliably the same:

1. Processes of gender recognition and identification are complex, lengthy, and riven with redundant requirements, promoting stress and uncertainty
2. Acts of discrimination, including those classifiable as hate crimes, occur, and have increased in intensity during the current public debate over gender recognition and self-identification.

For a group with known vulnerability to mental ill health, self-harm, and suicide ideation/attempts, both of the above serve to exacerbate an already acute situation nationally.

It is my view that permitting self-identification of gender would eliminate the first issue altogether, and also serve to ameliorate the second. The end result would, I suggest, be a notable reduction in the aforementioned serious mental health pressure faced by this group.

Self-identification, put simply, makes sense. It puts the process of legal gender transitioning in the hands of private individuals, and removes swathes of needless bureaucracy. Requirements such as proving dysphoria, and living as a given gender for 2 years, are arbitrary, and placing arbitrary limitations on marginalised groups runs counter to the spirit of British law, and might I suggest British cultural values, relating to non-discrimination and respect for rights. Self-identification, as has already been adopted successfully in our nations, trusts private individuals, eliminates red tape, and would provide emotional relief to a marginalised group during an extraordinarily difficult time.

It is on this point of cultural values that my proposal that hate speech/crimes towards trans individuals would likely decrease with self-identification hinges. As I have mentioned, such regrettable instances are observed to have risen since this issue has re-entered significant public debate, and it is naturally the government's responsibility to help tackle crime and social division of all kinds. A clear statement of national acceptance towards the trans community by parliament, by returning to the original government intention of introducing self-identification, would do much to lessen the zeal of those few who have been, regrettably, emboldened by anti-trans narratives put forth lately by sections of the news media and, of course, social media websites. This government has the opportunity to be on the right side of history on this issue, and begin to heal a growing divide in our nation.

In summary, based on my observation of national trends, and my deeper understanding of the challenges faced by my trans friends, current law on gender identification is needlessly obstructive, the proposed changes do not go far enough to reduce the problems faced nationwide, and the continuation of the present debate without decisive government support for the trans community has caused, and continues to cause, harm. As such, I implore the Committee to recommend full gender self-identification, as a simple and clear approach to improving life for trans people in the UK.

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