

Written evidence submitted by Ms Lizzi Lewis (GRA0047)

I'm responding to this as a cis individual who has seen how difficult the process currently is for trans friends.

I think placing the procedure online should happen, but not exclusively as there are some for whom this may limit accessibility so both online and offline options should be available.

The nominal amount I believe is in line with trying to make the process "kinder" and should definitely be instated.

Three new gender clinics this year, and next year, and the year after that, would be great. My understanding is that the clinics referred to in your consultation are already in existence, so it is misleading to suggest they are new. Please create genuinely new ones as well. Trans people are having to wait outrageously long times, and these extended waiting times can cause severe mental and physical health problems, especially if the wait prevents access to hormones needed. It can be unbearable, and this change cannot happen soon enough.

I believe the fee for obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate should be removed or made absolutely nominal. No trans person should have to jump through additional financial hoops in order to receive official recognition that they are who they say they are. That is not kind or more straightforward, and adds another layer of complexity and vulnerability to their situation.

A gender dysphoria diagnosis should not be required for trans people to identify as trans. The trans community is vastly diverse, and as vastly misunderstood. Listen to them and learn from them. Do not dictate what they need to have diagnosed in order to be trans. I believe they have told you this in the past. There should be no imposition from cis people requiring the experience trans people 'ought' to undergo before being validated as trans people. They are competent to identify themselves without needing to 'prove' anything through additional diagnoses.

Likewise I don't believe there should be any requirement for individuals to have lived in their acquired gender for at least two years. There are no rules for 'how one should live as a man/woman' for cis people. How would you qualify this? And why would you want to, given that without the support of gender clinics and a GRC, some trans people are put at enormous risk by this requirement. It is inhumane. It is not kind. It is not straightforward. It should go.

I believe the statutory declaration should be made simple and accessible for all trans people to complete in the shortest amount of time possible.

I do not think there should be ANY requirement for spousal consent involved in transitioning as it effectively allows a spouse to remove personal autonomy from their trans partner. This is a total abuse of power and this power should never be held by anyone regarding someone else's transition. Marriage is marriage, no matter the gender of the people within it. One person's transition will not undermine the rights of their spouse or civil partner. If that person is unable to accept their partner's transition, they will be able to obtain a divorce through the courts per the usual routes for people who believe they and their spouse are no longer a viable partnership.

I definitely believe the age at which people can apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate should be lowered. I knew I was a girl from a very young age. I'm sure trans people are equally astute (though probably more bewildered due to society's insistence on pelting children with cisheteronormativity). I think children of ten or so would be able to confidently state their gender, so there should be no need to wait until 18 for this to be acknowledged.

I also believe there should be far less call for 'evidence'. The courts do not require me to provide evidence of being female. They do not require me to dress or act a certain way for a certain length of time, or to undergo or agree to undergo any procedures in order to be recognised as female. They certainly do not require me to commit to continuing to act or dress a certain way in order to continue being female. That I happen to be cis is the only reason for this, and I think it is outrageous that anyone has to go endure so much scrutiny and insistence on meeting nebulous and unreasonable externally imposed expectations because they happen to be trans.

I believe the Government should include in its proposals that trans people should be consulted, quite possibly to the exclusion of cis people, on the things which impact them, their community, and their access to gender support/gender recognition. I do not believe cis voices are appropriate, as this encourages hateful and bigoted people to stick their oar in. I vehemently believe there is too much emphasis on the cis voice in matters regarding trans people, and it is inappropriate. My strong and urgent recommendation would be to empower the trans community and enable them to shape the legislation moving forwards. This would be kindest and most straightforward of all.

With regard to wider issues:

I think if there are vastly larger numbers of people identifying as trans than are applying for GRCs, the thing speaks for itself - the process is unnecessarily complex and offputting, and urgently needs to change.

Regarding single sex spaces, I feel these are already archaic and need to change. For people who are nonbinary or gender-fluid, they are likely inappropriate and unkind. For people who are cis but may not appear traditionally masculine or feminine, it can add a level of danger when rabid bigots attempt to 'defend' their right to single sex spaces. Likewise for trans people, who are then placed in a potentially awkward situation of having to 'appear' a particular way in order to appease someone else's view of their gender in order to safely access for instance a bathroom. I think there is more work that needs to be done on this.

If trans people are not adequately protected currently (please consult your statistics for crimes against trans people, and PLEASE consult trans people themselves for their experiences) then the Equality Act can be said to be failing. Trans people will advise you as to the reforms needed. Please include them in your conversations. Likewise regarding issues trans people have in accessing support services. Ask them. Don't ask the population at large.

Legal reforms are definitely needed to better support trans, gender-fluid, and non-binary people. Please, please ask them.

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