

Written evidence submitted by Ms Rayya Ghul (GRA0263)

Evidence for reform of the gender recognition process

My name is Rayya Ghul and I work in the Institute for Academic Development at the University of Edinburgh.

As part of my work I have conducted focus groups with trans and/or non-binary students capturing their experiences in order to produce resources for staff and students on supporting trans and/or non-binary students.

The lived experience of these students is of grave concern to me. I have been involved in similar projects for students of colour and lesbian/gay/bisexual students. In contrast, the trans and/or non-binary students are experiencing far higher levels of hostility and discrimination than the other protected groups. They ascribe this in a large part to the increased hostility within the media as a result of the recent consultations about gender reform. Almost all of this hostility has been based on erroneous perceptions of the effect of gender reform on women. These have been promoted through paid-for campaigns and anti-trans interest groups and have spread lies and disinformation, particularly targeting trans women.

I believe strongly that the proposed reforms should be adopted as soon as possible for two main reasons. The first is that in countries where similar reforms have taken place, there has been no evidence that there has been a wave of men seeking (what is a permanent) gender transition in order to abuse women or take away women's rights. As a lifelong feminist I have concerns regarding male violence, but I do not believe that these should be conflated with trans women, whom I regard as women. In fact, I see the increased focus on anti-trans rhetoric as an unwelcome distraction from the feminist cause. Some of the groups using women's rights as a cover for their anti-trans activities share values with people who actively campaign against women's rights, such as abortion, and therefore I do not regard them as genuinely concerned for women's safety.

The second reason is that I believe the backlash against trans people is fuelled by the gender reform consultations much as happened with the legalisation of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Once the legislation was reformed, the hostility lessened considerably. The two consultations in Scotland and now this second one in Westminster are damaging and divisive and therefore I strongly support completing the gender reform without delay.

In addition to these two reasons, I would also like to highlight that I believe the government already has all the evidence that the proposed gender reform is important and necessary and would not result in the wild scenarios proposed by those who oppose reform. I appreciate that reform must be taken with care so as not to disadvantage other protected groups. However, I believe that there are certain hostile actors who are abusing this duty of care to promote transphobic propaganda as feminist mainstream views through using social and media and celebrity to create an illusion of unity against reform. Both Scottish consultations demonstrated there was overwhelming support for reform and I doubt that other UK nations are any different.

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