

The existing law already allows terrible distortions of God's good design. But officially endorsing self-declaration would make the situation far worse. More people, already suffering a psychological problem, will be entrenched in their distortion of reality. It would also risk giving sexual predators unrestricted access to facilities for the opposite sex.

A new approach that says a man can be a woman on the basis of nothing at all. This makes the very idea of men and women meaningless. In 2018 the Equalities Minister acknowledged the rapid rise in referrals for gender dysphoria, particularly among girls. An inquiry will investigate possible reasons for the rise, including the influence of social media and the promotion of transgender issues in schools.

Research has shown that peer pressure plays a significant role in a large number of cases of children claiming to have gender dysphoria.

The Director of the UK's Gender Identity Development Service, Dr Polly Carmichael, has admitted that we should be "asking questions about whether some people are getting caught up in something".

Parents, doctors and academics are concerned that sex-changes are being offered without serious diagnosis. It would be reckless to remove this threshold for those seeking legal sex-change. The requirement at least means that there is medical scrutiny before a legal sex-change can take place. If not, there will be increased opportunity for sex-change declarations by people with malicious intent. Medical scrutiny also gives a chance for alternative or additional diagnoses to be reached. It is well documented that those diagnosed with gender dysphoria often have other mental health issues.

The requirement for evidence of two years living in the opposite sex should not be removed or shortened. It is right that for important life changes to require a significant quantity of evidence, The desire to live as the opposite sex is often temporary, though it may be experienced for several years, giving the impression of permanence. Often detransitioners took years to finally decide to reverse their sex-change. The possibility of regret must be given time to develop. Some transgender people now feel trapped in their acquired sex, and resent the fact that they were affirmed too quickly without appropriate assessment.

The statutory declaration is fitting, applicants should have to affirm that they understand what they are doing and that they intend it to be permanent. This reflects the enormity of the decision. Removing the statutory declaration encourages a trivialised understanding of a person's sex as something that is fluid and open to frequent change. However, a statutory declaration must be reversible, for those who regret their decision and want to return to identifying as their birth sex.

A spouse must be asked if they consent to their marriage continuing before their partner can obtain a legal sex-change. This is entirely appropriate. Removing spousal consent allows a transgender person to make decisions over their husband or wife. Marriage consists in solemn promises. The breaking of these promises is painful and disruptive. One party should not have the unilateral right to alter the legal nature of the marriage. A substantial proportion of the population opposed the introduction of same-sex marriage. It would be entirely unreasonable to force people into a legal arrangement they morally oppose.

The lower age limit should not be lowered. In England and Wales, under-18s cannot legally get a tattoo, vote, or purchase cigarettes, alcohol or fireworks. Reducing the age limit for legal sex-change opens the door to a surge of confused young people. Teenagers are particularly vulnerable. Many 'de-transitioners' complain that they were affirmed as transgender when they were teenagers, without being properly assessed.

There is no scientific basis for a 'third sex'. Biologically, we are either male or female. There will be enormous practical and legal difficulties in creating rights for a third sex. If a third sex can be dreamed up without an objective basis, where will it end? A self-declaration model in which there are three sexes to

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**choose from will be entirely meaningless. Anyone would be permitted to float between three empty categories, none of which have any objective definition.**

**November 2020**