

Some responses to the Select Committee on the government's response to the GRA consultation.

I am a 62 year old woman and a former secondary headteacher. **I would prefer my responses to remain anonymous** – this is because of the way in which women who express any form of opinion other than complete agreement with trans rights activists are treated. I have witnessed them being bullied on and offline, threatened with physical and sexual violence, their families threatened, their employers contacted and encouraged to dismiss them and so on.

I have responded only to areas in which I have specific expertise and experience.

The Government's response to the GRA consultation:

1. Should the age limit at which people can apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) be lowered?

My experience as a **secondary teacher and headteacher** tells me this would be a very bad idea indeed. Our awareness of brain development and intellectual maturity tells us that – in fact – an adult's cognitive processes are not fully matured until s/he is 25 years old. Having witnessed young people feel they are capable of making often life-changing decisions under the age of 18 and then regretting them, it would be catastrophic to allow the age-limit for a GRC to be changed. The NHS has recently changed its guidance on the use of so-called "puberty blockers" on children, precisely because they have realised that too little is known about the long-term effects of these drugs on children's bodies. Lowering the age of acquisition of a GRC risks sending too many children on a road which includes taking these dangerous, life-changing drugs.

Currently, many Local Authorities, academies and schools have been misled into believing they must allow trans-identified youngsters to use toilets, changing rooms, etc. of the 'gender' with which they identify, resulting in a loss of privacy and safety for girls in their most formative years of puberty. Girls coping with menstruation are finding themselves forced to share toilets with boys and teacher friends report that many girls are unwilling to use the toilets because of the presence of boys. This is not only incorrect, it's dangerous and goes entirely against the principles of safeguarding which schools are meant to enforce rigorously. **Allowing a younger age for acquisition of a GRC (and especially if the process is made faster and easier) would endanger children, especially girls.**

2. Are the provisions in the Equality Act for the provision of single-sex and separate-sex spaces and facilities in some circumstances clear and useable for service providers and service users? If not, is reform or further guidance needed?

These provisions must be made clearer – that single sex spaces (not gender) are to be rigorously enforced and much clearer direction must be sent to all organisations. A personal example: my local authority runs leisure centres and I have been a member for some years. I have been a regular gym user for 30 years, in order to regulate my weight and in order to improve my mental health. I was sexually assaulted some years ago and – like many women – cannot countenance the idea of males being present in the changing rooms designated for women. This has occurred, despite the provisions in the EA2010 that single sex exemptions should be made – with the result that even

Written evidence submitted by A Member of the Public [GRA0378]

women's rape crisis centres and hostels, hospital wards, prisons, etc. have been persuaded that they 'must' accept trans-identified men. This is already negatively affecting women.

I learnt last year that East Riding Leisure had secretly adopted a 'self-id' policy, wherein any man who "feels more comfortable" can use the women's changing rooms and toilets. The changing rooms are open-plan, meaning women's privacy and safety is compromised. After prolonged correspondence – during which East Riding Leisure admitted they had **conducted neither risk assessments nor equality impact assessments** – I have had to cease using the leisure centres, which are the only ones available to me. This will apply to most women if such policies become widespread, most especially those **who have been assaulted sexually or physically, those with mental health issues which makes them fear male presence and women whose faith (particularly Muslim and Jewish) precludes undressing where males might be present.**

A further example of how this will negatively affect some of the most vulnerable women concerns health and social care professionals. My late mother became seriously ill with terminal cancer and was bedridden and helpless in her final 9 months of life. This necessitated a number of hospital stays and carers visiting her 3 times a day at home, carrying out the most personal of care for her. She could not accept a man undertaking these things and it was possible for her to request only women both in hospital and with the care providers. IF the provision in the Equality Act is overridden such that trans-identified men are treated as women for such purposes, women like my mother would be forced to accept transwomen – whom they see as men – for such care OR be called "transphobic". This is a shocking proposal. Unfortunately, because many organisations (including, astonishingly, the NHS) have been persuaded that they must not keep single-sex provisions, women are already finding their right to privacy and safety compromised.

I would like the select committee to understand this especially: self-id will render many areas of life closed to many women and girls.

3. Does the Equality Act adequately protect trans people? If not, what reforms, if any, are needed

As indicated above, the EA does not, in fact protect **women** and girls because too many organisations and businesses are now ignoring the fact that sex is a protected characteristic, leading to the removal of women's single sex toilets, changing rooms, etc.

November 2020