

Response to the Women and Equalities Committee's Call for Evidence on reforming the Gender Recognition Act

Whilst I hold to a clear biological definition of gender as either male or female and believe that people with gender dysphoria should be sensitively and lovingly supported to accept and live within this definition, I make the following points in recognition of the relevant laws as they stand at present.

Will the Government's proposed changes meet its aim of making the process "kinder and more straight forward"?

The word 'kinder' is rather subjective and depends on view and ideology of the proposers of change. It is therefore difficult to have 'kindness' as an aim. Making the process straighter forward is not necessarily in the person's best interest. While it is good for any process to be understandable and accessible, if it is too fast and too soon the person may not have sufficient time to make such a permanent decision over their gender dysphoria.

Should a fee for obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate be removed or retained? Are there other financial burdens on applicants that could be removed or retained?

I understand the £140 fee has been removed. As with other services free at the point of delivery, there is no reason to reinstate it if this is done through the support of national health services.

Should the requirement for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria be removed?

No. The current system of medical diagnoses is radical and necessary for gender reconsideration and often incorporates and contextualises other aspects of mental health in the person's life. Without it a man or woman can change sex on the basis of nothing at all. This opens the door to people with malicious intent.

The influence on people, particularly teenagers, to consider their gender identity has risen extensively in the past decade and there is current investigation [I understand this has been requested by Equalities Minister in 2018] into the reason for such rises and the influence of social media, internet content, peer pressure and promotion of transgender issues in schools. Parents, doctors, academics and MPs likewise are concerned about lack of serious diagnosis.

The Director of the UK's Gender Identity Development Service, Dr Polly Carmichael has stated her concerns over this rise. [Polly Carmichael, Director of the Tavistock and Portman Gender Identity Clinic speaking on BBC Radio 4, 8 April 2018]

Should there be changes to the requirement for individuals to have lived in their acquired gender for at least two years?

No. This is a significant and permanent decision that needs time for consideration. There are many examples of people regretting the change and wishing to return to their biological male/female gender and who are dissatisfied with the support prior to the decision to change. It is often a temporary phase, particularly in children and teenagers. The 2-year period allows time for this process while the person is lovingly, professionally and wisely supported.

What is your view of the statutory declaration and should any changes have been made to it?

Such a declaration is fitting for such a life changing decision affecting not only the individual but others around them. They must understand what they are doing and the statement helps to indicate

Written evidence submitted by Rev Colin Jones [GRA1315]

this understanding. It encourages an attitude that gender is fluid and depends on how you feel at various times in your life.

The statement must remain reversible once, due to those who have subsequently changed their mind and regretted the decision.

Does the spousal consent provision in the Act need reforming? If so, how? If it needs reforming or removal, is anything else needed to protect any rights of the spouse or civil partner?

No. Marriage is a legal, solemn and moral commitment and agreement between two people and both must be consulted over any change of gender and its implications. The spouse must be able to say whether the marriage can continue. Any marriage change is painful and complex and neither partner should have a unilateral right to force change to its legal nature.

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

Definitely not. Teenage years often involve transitory feelings and decisions as the individual progresses to adulthood. The individual needs protection from making these decisions during this transitory stage of their life. There is currently an unexplained surge in confused young people. I understand from research that many have other mental health issues along side gender dysphoria.

What impact will these proposed changes have on those people applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate, and on trans people more generally?

I consider it will lead to greater gender dysphoria, many still not happy within their body; rushed decisions, greater mental health impact, particularly amongst teenagers and younger children through ill advised gender teachings in school education; many anomalies and legal complexities such as access to toilets and changing facilities; and many more negative consequences.

What else should the Government have included in its proposals, if anything?

It should be reviewing the previous changes in legislation in the light of current full range of experience by people with gender dysphoria.

Are there challenges in the way the Gender Recognition Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010 interact? For example, in terms of the different language and terminology used across both pieces of legislation.

Both lack of objective definition, or substantial increase in number of definitions will complicate this interaction.

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?

Again, this will be complex and there are already many court cases and disputes as to its implementation.

Are legal reforms needed to better support the rights of gender-fluid and non-binary people? If so, how?

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No. I can see no scientific basis for a third sex. Indeed it is claimed by some influential groups such as Mermaids that there are around 100 different genders, if not billions! This appears to greatly move away from a desire for less distinction in society. A self-declaration model is effectively meaningless within a societal context. It raise complex legal issues for society.

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