

Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Gender Recognition Act 2004

I have various concerns arising from a lifetime (86 years) of experience largely shielded from the disorientating influences which seem to have gained so much influence in recent years. My response to questions follows.

1. Will the Government's proposed changes make the process "kinder and more straightforward"?
Putting it all online may well isolate a person from seeking advice. Without sound advice the influence of social media or peer pressure could precipitate a hasty decision leading to severely adverse and irreversible consequences. Making the procedure more straightforward may in fact result in very unkind consequences. Other changes are considered under their own headings.
2. Fee to obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC)?
A significant but not excessive fee should be charged to discourage frivolous applications.
3. Should the requirement for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria be removed?
Certainly not. For the great majority of people, changing feelings about themselves may be a natural process of development. However that goes, a person's sex or gender is defined at birth, not by their feelings or anyone else's. A very small minority may need assistance of drugs or surgery to complete development according to sex at birth. Any attempt to CHANGE sex by these means cannot fulfil its purpose: it will probably lead to regrets or disaster with permanent consequences that the patient is in limbo, neither a man nor a woman (unless they are more successful than present attempts to re-define these terms). Therefore a diagnosis that fully explores and can advise on the situation is very important. The competence of the person making the diagnosis should be monitored, perhaps certified, to ensure balanced advice with no conflict of interests (for example, links with a gender change clinic).
Mental health should be considered, since a declared change of gender may make matters worse.
Freedom of access to single sex areas could be achieved by declaration of sex change for malicious purposes.
4. The requirement for individuals to have lived in their acquired gender for at least two years should be retained. It safeguards against premature response to feelings that are liable to change and protects against malicious exploitation as a result of declared gender change.
5. Statutory declaration – no comment.
6. Spousal consent provision does not need amendment. If a couple made a marriage commitment as opposite sex partners a unilateral decision by one partner to change sex, hence change to a same-sex marriage cannot be valid.
7. Should the age limit at which people can apply for a gender recognition certificate be lowered? No. Keep to the lower limit of 18 years to avoid the temptation or pressure to make a premature, potentially life-changing choice earlier. Self-image and self-confidence are fragile and changeable, especially in teen age years. Support to build people up with

self-confidence should be part of growing up without letting changeable feelings or trends cause needless confusion.

8. What impact will these proposed changes have on those people applying for a GRC and on trans people more generally? The question should say “would”, not “will”, as I hope the decision has not yet been made. As already noted, the first two changes would tend to encourage more hasty decisions and actions when it is preferable to take more time to consider and consult. The effect of the third proposal, to open more gender clinics, may be to hasten towards an assumed solution before the problem is properly understood. The Government should give priority to the promised investigation into why the demand for these clinics has risen so rapidly in recent years and why girls are such a high proportion of those seeking this help. This investigation should thoroughly examine the basis of facts and misinformation that lie behind gender uncertainty.

It is a matter of profound concern that LGBT campaigners seek to confront and pressurise as many people as possible to accept their various norms of life style as human rights. This goes against the norms and beliefs of faith communities and individuals who have a right in law to freedoms of belief and expression. Of even greater concern are the attempts to bias early years’ education to accept LGBT ideas and begin to confuse schoolchildren of such an age by questioning facts and feelings that are a challenge to older children and adults.

9. Why is the number of people applying for GRCs so low compared to the number of people identifying as transgender?

This is probably a result of rapidly widening confusion over gender with the increase of propaganda and social media discussion of the issue. A person confused about these matters may well express this by choosing the non-committed category ‘transgender’ as the way to describe their uncertainty. It is a reasonable way for people to describe their position while they take whatever time they need to think through the issues, seek relevant and reliable advice and make an unpressurised decision. The discrepancy of numbers noted should continue if people allow themselves plenty of time to decide about gender identity: it is a safe, wise way to behave before making a decision that could be irrevocable, life changing and regretted.

The proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act would be likely to remove protection from people trying to reach sound conclusions about their gender for two reasons. The first is that the proposals would enable and perhaps encourage more hasty decisions than should be taken over lifetime choices. The second is that the Act is intended to enable recognition of an **acquired** gender. Since gender is determined before birth by each person’s sex it cannot be acquired. In reality and truth the word “assumed” should be used instead of “acquired”. Anyone can choose to assume characteristics which may include those of either gender but not their sex. The opportunity for anyone to choose to assume the characteristics of the opposite sex should be allowed, provided that it is not for malicious purposes. This should avoid any assumption that drug therapy or surgery is part of such a choice. People need protection from regrettable and irreversible actions as far as possible, not facilitation of them.