

Call for Evidence

My name is Julie, I am the very proud parent of a transgender woman. I am submitting evidence because not enough is done to support transgender people. The GRA should be completely overhauled and replaced with a simple process to change gender legally. My personal preference would be self-identification.

The Government's response to the GRA consultation:

- The Government's proposed changes are insignificant and will certainly not make the process "kinder and more straight forward". Like in other countries, trans people should be allowed to self-identify their gender, not have to rely on the psychological assessment of strangers. Individuals should have greater access to hormonal treatment etc by having a GP service that is non-judgemental and works in the best interest of the patient. Not as I have experienced and be told "it's just a phase" and refused treatment of any description as the GP manager deems it "unusual". How can reducing the fee make any difference if the medical services in this country are discriminatory and judgemental?
- No there should not be a fee for a GRC. If a trans person chooses to change their name on all their identification ie passport, a substantial fee will be incurred approx. £80. They will have to pay £18.50 to change their name by Deed Poll and they will have the laborious and cumbersome expense of changing their driving licence, their educational and professional certificates their bank details and so on. No more charges should be applied. Why do everything back to front? Make it easier and cheaper to obtain a GRC, then that certificate can be used to change all of the above?
- Yes a requirement for a gender dysphoria diagnosis should be removed! The current system simply fills the pockets of psychiatrists at approx. £50 a session. Two, one hour (or considerably less in my experience) sessions are not enough to diagnose anything! Trans people may very well require counselling of some description. Wouldn't we all benefit from someone to talk to in a non-judgemental and supportive way? But the current system is merely tick-boxing and not only a financial barrier to many many trans people, but ridiculously few professionals available to offer a service, however much money you have! Can a GP give a diagnosis to remove this unacceptable expense? Not really, as I have said above, many many GPs simply aren't sympathetic to the trans community and don't have the skills to help even if they were.
- The requirement to live in their acquired gender is meaningless! What does that even mean? A trans-woman has to wear makeup, a dress and high-heels! I know natural born women who haven't worn a dress, makeup and high-heels since their wedding day in the mid-90s. How do men live? How do women live? We wake up, go to work, meet up with our friends, eat our dinner, go to bed, repeat. We all do the same things, man, woman or other. This requirement is ridiculous! Can you imagine being a 6'2" trans-woman who is getting no support from the NHS, waiting 3 years (or more now with the delays created by the pandemic) to get hormone treatment. Someone who has told all their friends and family that they are trans, they feel like a woman and dress how they feel comfortable dressing. But their gender dysphoria is so acute, they suffer from depression, they hate their bodies they have no counselling support, no support from their GP and then the Government tell them, the only way they can get a GRC is to dress up in drag ... even asking this question show the core of this issue, a complete and utter lack of understanding and support from the people who make the rules!!!!

Written evidence submitted by Albury [GRA1337]

- The Statutory Declaration is problematic as again it incurs unnecessary expense ie a solicitor. When you apply for a passport, you just need a teacher or an accountant, why couldn't you do the same here? Also, if you keep the Statutory Declaration, why on earth would you need any other proof? All the current requirements and documentation is draconian and just forcing people to jump through unnecessary hoops. The maximum that is required is a Statutory Declaration – absolutely NOTHING else. However, self-identification should be the way forward, and like your passport, signed off by your local Job Centre, your accountant, your teacher, your librarian etc.
- Spousal consent! If you need to have your spouse's consent to acquire your preferred gender, then you're married to the wrong person!!! Absolutely no consent should be required from anyone. This is a misogynist requirement which should never have existed. Whether you have a civil partnership or a marriage, it is a private matter between the individuals how they are going to work it out ... and nobody else! The pair will either stay married or they will divorce, no rights are affected.
- The age limit should be lowered to at least 16. If you can have sex, you can choose what kind of sex you want and be honest about who you are. Sixteen is also the age that you get your NI card, your first moped driving licence, in Scotland you can marry. At least 16, however, there is plenty of arguments to support it being even lower, but 16 is an absolute must.
- The current proposals will have virtually no impact on the trans community. If you are in the process of applying for the GRC, you have been put through a long and difficult process to get to this point, about 2 years to sort out the paperwork. This does not include the many years of transitioning socially and medically. How long do you think, 10 years, 20 years ... more? Years spent in anguish and often suffering from depression. How many people who have attempted or completed suicide waiting for the GIC to reply? How many people have been turned down by their GPs and have to take the process private or online? Reducing the fee and putting it on-line is almost meaningless to these people. To the wider trans community ... no impact whatsoever. Three new clinic ... we'll believe it when we see it!!!!
- The Government should have included a complete overhaul of trans health care in this country. It is just not good enough. Too many people are suffering and even dying waiting. Is there any other social condition that kills people? The Government should do more, much, much more. Changing the NHS's negative attitudes and lack of capacity requires real investment. The opportunity to self-identification would be safe, appropriate and ease at least some of the suffering trans people experience. The Government could make a huge difference, with very little cost to the nation.
- The Scottish changes don't go far enough, for all the same reasons mentioned above. Nothing more than a Statutory Declaration or preferably, self-identification should be required.

Wider issues concerning transgender equality and current legislation:

- I don't think you need me to answer this question! More people identify as trans than apply for the GRC because it's too expensive, it takes too long and it is draconian!
- The GRCA 2004 should merely be a paragraph in the Equality Act. The paragraph should say that everyone has the right to live their authentic self without prejudice or discrimination. A vast amount of this prejudice is created by the current legislation and should be abolished.
- Single-sex spaces and services are often a necessity, I can't think of many off the top of my head but I'm sure there's a need for some. However, the legislation should include

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confirmation that a trans-man is a man and that a trans-woman is a woman. Or if that's too difficult the Act should be altered to stipulate 'man and trans-man', 'woman and trans-woman'. In a society where we have much more gender fluidity than ever before, perhaps greater discussion should be made about why certain spaces and services are single sex, how many more spaces are actually gender neutral? In many schools and most universities, the toilets are gender neutral. All disabled toilets have always been gender neutral. At my local swimming pool, the changing rooms are all mixed, the showers, the sauna. If natural born woman want a woman's only club, they have to search it out and pay for it. However, under the Act, they should not exclude trans-woman, even if they possess a penis. The majority of trans people have enough body image issues not to really want to be seen naked, they are not the actual issue. The concern is that a pervert will pretend to be a woman so they can see naked women. This should be a crime and should be dealt with as such. If the GRC was easier to obtain, trans-woman (and lets face it this is who everyone is worried about) can show their commitment to their gender reassignment, their full and absolute commitment to their acquired gender and although they should never have to prove themselves, can easily and instantly show they are a legal woman and have every right to use the women's toilets!

- The Equality Act cannot protect trans people as long as it differentiates between men and woman and basically the third category of trans people. It may be against the Act to discriminate on the basis of transgender ie you can't use this toilet because you are a 'man', because if those toilets do not consequently become accessible to trans-woman, nothing has changed. Just because society are not allowed to mis-gender someone, doesn't mean they will stop thinking it in their head. We want an Equality Act which is meaningful and does not ghettoise trans people. The act should be more inclusive of transgender people in their preferred sex, not make them a third sex!
- I cannot speak about social care, but my experience of the NHS has been very poor. My own GP has point-blank refused support. Once someone persuades their GP to refer them to a GIC, absolutely nothing happens for years and years and years. A confirmation letter has not even been received after been referred in February 2020. Does that mean they are in the system, was the referral ever even made, who can you call to find out?
- Gender-fluid and non-binary people are a growing community. They are the people you need to talk to to ask about what they want from legal reforms. This discussion is about trans people and their legal right to a GRC and rights under the Equality Act. Don't lump everyone together, if you genuinely want to know what non-binary and gender-fluid need from legislation, you must ask them. It is insulting to clump everyone together just because they don't conform to traditional gender stereotypes.

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