

Introduction

I am an individual

Since childhood I have suffered depression and low self-esteem, and have sought treatment on numerous occasions. I've always known the cause and for the last 7 years I've been attending a specialist NHS Gender Identity Clinic in London - world leaders in the treatment of transgender people.

I've learned that being transgender is not a choice. The only choice is whether to acknowledge it or hide it. Through fear I chose to hide it for most of my life. As I've grown older, society too has grown up, and the law has changed to recognise people like me exist and to help us live without fear. Because of this I now choose to stop hiding and explore what it means for me to be an openly transgender person. I've been open about it for 12 months now and have suffered no negative consequences, and my depression and self-esteem are both improved.

My reasons for submitting evidence is to encourage continued progress in the recognition and inclusion of trans people by society so fewer people need to feel shame and fear for what they are.

My Evidence for the Government's response to the GRA consultation:

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

- A little
- 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?
 - Fee should not be removed because with no fee, the process could be hijacked by bad actors clogging up the system. A fee indicated this is not a trivial process, but should be low so the process is accessible - similar to eye test levels (£20 ish)
- Should the requirement for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria be removed?
 - Medical diagnosis should be removed but ID confirmation by a respected citizen, should be included, similar to passport ID verification.
- Should there be changes to the requirement for individuals to have lived in their acquired gender for at least two years?
 - The problem is in identifying what 'living in their acquired gender' means. Transition is a gradual process for most, and a

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clear starting point is difficult to identify. If the goal is to determine how serious the applicant is, then a combination of other factors could be assessed.

- What is your view of the statutory declaration and should any changes have been made to it?
 - Eventually statutory declaration, being a legally binding declaration, should be enough. However right now, on its own, it may not be enough for the wider society to get behind, so additional evidence is probably prudent. The goal being respectful inclusion of trans people into society. Society needs to believe the reassignment is genuine and in order to respect it. Anything less puts all trans people at risk.

- 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?
 - Spousal consent needs removing. In a good marriage there will be discussion, and if the marriage fails, that is between the couple themselves. Spousal approval is unnecessary and potentially coercive.

- Should the age limit at which people can apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) be lowered?
 - Defined age limit is inappropriate. It should be decided on a case by case basis. Parental consent and other safeguards should be considered for minors. Lack of parental consent in the face of overwhelming other evidence should not prevent reassignment.

- What impact will these proposed changes have on those people applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate, and on trans people more generally?
 - GRA is not as important as changing everyday ID documents and changing societal attitudes towards trans people. Access specialist gender services is more important.

- What else should the Government have included in its proposals, if anything?
 - Including a non-binary option. This would recognise the existence of intersex and non-binary gender identities. The non-binary option should be included in official documents such as Driving licenses, and the 'permanent change' requirement should not be required for non-binary identities because many

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bay grow into a binary identity. This will also mean intersex and non-binary people will not be compelled to perjure themselves in official documentation.

- Does the Scottish Government's proposed Bill offer a more suitable alternative to reforming the Gender Recognition Act 2004?
 - No Opinion

Wider issues concerning transgender equality and current legislation:

- Why is the number of people applying for GRCs so low compared to the number of people identifying as transgender?
 - Because the GRC is less important than day to day documents like passport, Driving Licence, etc, and generally being treated respectfully by society. People are now generally respectful, but trans people who are closeted still suffer debilitating fear of disclosure. Efforts should be targeted at educating society
- 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.
 - It seems some vociferous elements of society with an anti-trans bias like to twist the meanings to further an agenda of exclusion. The equalities act by its existence promotes and agenda of inclusion and should be interpreted in this light.
- 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?
 - I believe the act is clear. Schedule 3 Paragraph 28 allows exclusion of someone (an individual, not all people) with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment as a means of achieving a legitimate aim. This does not allow blanket exclusion of trans people. An example given in the explanatory notes to the Act is that of a group counselling service for female victims of sexual assault where the organisers could exclude a woman with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if they judge that clients would be unlikely to attend the session if she was there. Very much a case by case decision and not a policy decision.

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- Does the Equality Act adequately protect trans people? If not, what reforms, if any, are needed.
 - Equality act is mostly adequate, but does not clearly include Non-binary people. Real protection would come from more active inclusion education in workplaces and public information campaigns so the general population understands the equalities act better (to protect all people with protected characteristics)
- What issues do trans people have in accessing support services, including health and social care services, domestic violence and sexual violence services?
 - Health care is insufficient, and should be extended. More localised group therapy sessions could be made available to GPs as a first step on the way to the GICs. For many this may be enough to help them accept their own identities by meeting others and seeing that they are not abnormal.
- Are legal reforms needed to better support the rights of gender-fluid and non-binary people? If so, how?
 - Yes. They need to be recognised. They need to be able to fill out forms without committing perjury. They need to be included in Equalities act as a protected characteristic.

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