

Written evidence submitted by Victoria Manning [GRA1366]

I am submitting evidence as a cis woman who knows a number of trans women and men. I am keen to submit this evidence because I have been reading the nonsense written by transphobic people who claim to represent cis women. I want to make the point strongly that they do not speak for me, nor anyone I know.

As a gay woman I experienced first-hand the extraordinary stress and anxiety resulting from the so-called 'debate' around equal marriage. Homophobic people declared that same-sex marriage rights would bring down society. Everyone can now see for themselves how ridiculous this 'argument' is. The current arguments against trans people accessing everything they need to live as their true gender is reminiscent of that, and just as hyperbolic.

Transphobic people argue that providing trans women with better and easier access to legal recognition of their gender represents a "danger" to women in women-only spaces. I have seen no evidence for this except for one or two isolated incidents which transphobes point to again and again. The danger to women, including trans women, comes overwhelming from violent men, not trans women. I am perfectly happy to share toilets and changing facilities with trans women. I have never felt uncomfortable in the company of trans women.

From reading the experiences of trans people on social media, the burden to prove their need for support and services is disproportionate and often not even possible in some circumstances. The £140 fee is difficult to pay for many trans people and this is one reason why. The years-long delays to accessing treatment is also a huge problem for trans people and this is an urgent problem. These barriers affect the mental health of trans people and their families and friends. Some trans people's lives become so unbearable during the wait for treatment that they end their lives. This must not continue. I urge the government to listen to trans people about what they need and to meet those needs.

It is clear to me from listening to trans people that agency is important and the spousal consent provision should be removed. The evidence from trans people themselves is that many know they are trans when they are children. The ability to block puberty is vital for the well-being of trans children and therefore inclusion in decision-making for trans young people is important. I urge the government to listen to organisations such as Mermaids who understand the needs of trans children and young people, and especially to listen to evidence from trans children and young people themselves.

Trans people, in particular trans women, are amongst the most vulnerable people in society. This is mainly due to the transphobic abuse they experience from individuals and the media. Trans people are at risk of violence when they present in their true gender and that means attending appointments in person can be dangerous. Placing the procedure online is an appropriate solution, but the government should also consider removing the requirement to prove a history of "living in their acquired gender for at least two years". The fact that the committee's call for evidence page concludes with mental health help lines demonstrates that the government is well aware of the fear and trauma faced daily by trans people trying to navigate a hostile environment.

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I urge the government not to assume that, because their voices are loud, the views of transphobic people are representative of most cis people. I urge the government to make evidence-based decisions, and not pander to the strongly held feelings of transphobic people who wish to harm and undermine trans people and their ability to live their best lives.

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