

## **Written evidence submitted by Lyndsey Maiden [GRA1371]**

I am writing as a concerned individual who has historically worked with vulnerable children, in women's refuges, as a director of a women's refuge and heavily involved in the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences for women, involved with POVA, child protection conferences and involved with helping set up a trans refuge.

So I speak from a broad background. I have not worked in this field for a few years however I have maintained interest in some of what has been happening. I am concerned at the recent proposed changes in law on gender and identity.

The notion that if no diagnosis of gender dysphoria is required in order to change your sex on your birth certificate the government would be coding gender ideology into British law concerns me hugely. The law would say a man is a woman if he says he is; that 'gender identity' overrides biological sex. As someone who has worked with the victims of people who are very controlling this concerns me as I fear the law of unintended consequences will put the most vulnerable people who we are trying to protect at risk.

When I worked at Women's Aid in Cardiff I was privy to the violence stats and it was predominantly very gendered, favouring men as the protagonists. There was one violent female in my three years there. I worked with the transgender community to set up a refuge for that group because they were incredibly vulnerable and all the violence came from men. They identified they needed their own space. My huge concern is that with changes in the law suddenly someone can self identify as a woman and go into spaces that they would have historically been barred from and run the risk of being called transphobic when trying to protect vulnerable people.

Further my work with child protection has shown me that there are enormous concerns during puberty that make young people vulnerable but taking drugs that radically alter their chemistry may not be the solution. Biology is not a social construct but how we are made to feel about our bodies is and perhaps that is what we should be tackling. We should be teaching young people to appreciate who they are and not tell them that surgery will solve how they perceive themselves. I see huge child protection issues here and potential for abuses.

I have many other concerns about this which are more gut feelings but I feel strongly that the repercussions need to be fully explored, everything from how it impacts women's prisons, women's refuges, child protection, school girl's only spaces etc. How do we stop the abuse of these safe places if we change how we recognise gender.

Thank you.

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