

REFORM OF THE GENDER RECOGNITION ACT

Response by NatWest Group

NatWest Group welcomed the opportunity to participate in the Government's consultation process on the reform of the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) in 2018.

NatWest Group supports a review of the identity rules in the UK to reflect the needs and rights of trans and non-binary people. Further to the publication of the UK Government's proposals for changes to the gender recognition process, we welcome the follow up inquiry by the Women and Equalities Committee to explore what further changes could be made to the GRA to improve transgender equality.

Whilst we recognise that the UK Government has committed to making some changes following the initial consultation we believe there is scope to do more to improve the process for transgender people.

Society is a diverse place with many kinds of people who are all unique. Making it easier for people wishing to change their gender status would help to safeguard the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of trans people, and continue the journey towards social and legal equality. For many trans people, talking to family, friends and colleagues regarding their feelings is extremely difficult and any help that can be provided through changes to legal protection and recognition is welcomed.

NatWest Group believes that no individual should be placed under any additional burden, be it emotional, physical or financial, to be able to be who they are. We believe the disparity between those applying for Gender Recognition Certificates and those identifying as transgender could be a result of the complexity and additional burden the GRA currently places on transgender people. This, we believe, is an indicator that real changes are required.

We support the adoption of a self-declaration system for legal gender recognition in the UK. We have already adopted this process in the workplace to ensure that colleagues can bring their whole selves to work every day, free of judgement, as part of our goal of ensuring all our staff are comfortable in their surroundings. We also extend the same levels of support to our trans and non-binary customers, enabling customers to self-declare gender changes with no requirement for additional evidence.

NatWest Group recognises that any further changes to the GRA aimed at removing barriers that restrict self-determination may indirectly impact others. Whilst we would be supportive of the removal of provisions such as the requirement for an individual to have lived in their acquired gender for at least two years and spousal consent, we would ask the inquiry to consider how these changes could be balanced against the need to protect the rights of others. We believe it remains essential that all the protected characteristics remain equally protected as enshrined in the UK Equality Act, 2010.

Written evidence submitted by NatWest Group (GRA1408)

Finally, there is clearly more awareness of this area than at the point at which the Equality Act was drafted. Although there have been developments in terms of the way in which the Equality Act has been interpreted by the courts (to extend the definition of “gender reassignment” to include non-binary) NatWest Group believe that further clarification and/or guidance would be helpful to employers and to ensure that employees and service users are aware of their rights.

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