

I am a 40 year-old transgender woman. I have been on the waiting list for the NHS gender clinic in Cardiff since September 2018. I have been told not to expect an appointment before March 2020, and so have accessed hormone replacement therapy privately. I have been living full time as a woman since February 2018.

The reduction of the fee to a 'nominal' amount is welcome but wholly inadequate. The requirement to provide a full medical history *and* two diagnosis of gender dysphoria comes with a significant cost, often over £1,000 as GP's and the NHS gender services don't provide this information for free.

The World Health Organisation removed gender identity disorder from its diagnostic criteria in 2019, replacing it with gender incongruence. Other countries have also de-medicalised the condition. It is a sad, worrying, and painful indication of the government's position that they have not chosen to do the same, instead reinforcing the idea that gender incongruence is a mental health disorder that can only be legitimised by cis-gender 'specialists', at the expense of the lived experience of trans gender people.

The continued presence of the spousal consent is also a significant concern. There is no justification for it and it places transgender people at the mercy of partners who may be actively hostile, and allows hostile partners to weaponise the transgender person's identity and personhood. Rather than relying on the finalisation of the divorce before issuing the GRC, the GRC could be issued after a set period of time regardless of the spouse's consent. They would be given that time, say six months to a year, to complete the divorce before a GRC is issued regardless of the status of the marriage.

This government should have taken the opportunity to give legal recognition to non-binary gender identities and provided non-binary individuals with a clear, simple path to obtaining documentation that recognises their identities.

Obtaining a GRC should be a simple form-filling process led by the transgender person, such as applying for a passport is, rather than an intense, expensive, and dehumanising process kept in the hands of medical professionals and bureaucrats. I will not be applying for a GRC as it stands. I simply do not have the time or the money to go through the process. It is difficult enough living in a society that is hostile to my existence day-to-day.

My greatest concern throughout this whole process has been the engagement with and encouragement of transphobia by the Equalities Minister. She has held meetings and appeared at events hosted by known transphobic organisations, and has done nothing to stop the lies and hatred that is regularly printed by the British media. There has been no attempt to expose these transphobic organisations as funded by far-right groups who have, in many instances, acted to take away the rights of gays, lesbians, and women more broadly as part of a well-funded and co-ordinated campaign to remove the human rights of everyone who is not a white, cis-gender man. Since the start of the original consultation, transphobic hate crimes and abuse have reached extraordinary levels and the community now fights daily against significant and credible threats to life and liberty. Cis women complain of being silenced from the front pages of national newspapers while trans women are afraid to leave the house for fear of being killed.

In this climate, any changes to the Equalities Act would be deeply worrying. The act is often weaponised against transgender people, with transphobic people and organisations seeking to use it to deny the rights of transgender people to access single-sex spaces—despite there being no evidence that transgender people, in particular women, are a threat to cisgender people. Despite trans women having used single-sex spaces for decades without worry or incident, there is now the

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very real danger that we will be forbidden from using any public toilet or changing room, effectively forcing us to present as men if we ever want to leave the house—including to go to work.

Rather than this being an important opportunity for advance the rights and human decency of transgender individuals, this enquiry has instead created a well-funded, well-coordinated network of transphobic hate groups and given them a large international platform. I now feel under the threat of violence, and worry about my rights being taken away whenever there is a new announcement from this government regarding transgender rights.

I am living the life I should have always lived, and I am living in fear. This consultation and the government's response have made the process, and living as a transgender woman, more cruel and unfair.

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