

My name is James Billingham, I'm a cisgender man so these changes don't affect me directly. I do have a number of trans friends who have been impacted by the botched implementation of GRA reforms, leading to a years long media campaign that shows no signs of easing up now the government have proposed the absolute minimum they could. So I wanted to give my view on these proposals. I hope the inquiry prioritises trans voices in this review, given they are mostly ignored and are the people affected by these changes.

Question 1: Will the Government's proposed changes meet its aim of making the process "kinder and more straight forward"?

It will make it slightly easier, if implemented properly. There are little to no details on what the "online" process will entail. If it just replaces the current process of posting reams of evidence to submitting reams of evidence via a web portal than its hard to see how that will significantly improve the process. Making it cheaper is obviously a good thing.

Not changing the actual process except to move to online doesn't make it "kinder", trans people are forced to supply intimate details of their lives for an anonymous group of people to decide if they are "trans enough" or not. That's inherently dehumanising and it remains in place.

Question 2: 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?

Yes it should be removed. There are also other burdens such as those experienced by a friend of mine who feels she can never get a GRC. She transitioned 40+ years ago, the main Dr who treated her is dead, the surgeon who performed her surgery is dead or retired. She'd have to go through a humiliating experience of "proving" she is who she says she is. Either privately at great cost, or waiting years on the NHS with costs of travel and psychologically as she has to "prove" she's trans again. All when she's been living happily as herself for almost as long as I've been alive.

Question 3: Should the requirement for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria be removed?

There is no objective test of gender dysphoria, other than the trans persons testimony that they experience it. So yes this should be removed and trans people believed.

Question 4: Should there be changes to the requirement for individuals to have lived in their acquired gender for at least two years?

Yes, this is again another demeaning requirement for trans people to meet. "Proving" they've lived and followed gendered stereotypes of "man"/"woman" by the measure of GID Doctors.

Question 5: What is your view of the statutory declaration and should any changes have been made to it?

The change should have been to make this the only requirement for Birth Certificate change. There are now 700 million people living in countries where trans people just make a statutory declaration to change their documents. Ireland for 5 years, Argentina for 10 years. Not one opponent of so-called “self ID” has been able to point to a single statistic in those countries of problems with that process.

Question 6: 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?

It needs to be removed, the rights of the individual to identify how they like shouldn't be superseded by a partner.

Question 7: Should the age limit at which people can apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) be lowered?

Yes, at a minimum to 16, trans 16 year olds can change passports, driving licences etc to show the correct gender so they should be able to change a Birth Certificate that isn't even an accepted form of ID.

Question 8: What impact will these proposed changes have on those people applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate, and on trans people more generally?

The main effect has been to subject trans people to years long disinformation campaign in the press and media. Where to this day the vast majority of people opposing reform don't seem to know trans people already have access to gendered/sexed facilities and services based on self ID. The current GRA process *mandates* they “live in gender” for two years on a self ID basis to even get a GRC.

The botched consultation followed up with the bare minimum of reform, all while leaks of rolling back trans rights were in the papers, has done nothing but harm trans people and whip up hatred and fear of trans people. The quadrupling of hate crimes against trans people is testament to the government's incompetence here.

Question 9: What else should the Government have included in its proposals, if anything?

Self ID for trans people, to be in line with the vast majority of progressive countries around the world. Yet more are implementing Self ID - Finland, New Zealand, etc - and the UK will be left further behind in LGBTQ+ rights.

Recognition of non-binary identities, the UK could again be a leader in LGBTQ+ rights if they implemented a proper change to also account for non-binary people.

Question 10: Does the Scottish Government's proposed Bill offer a more suitable alternative to reforming the Gender Recognition Act 2004?

It's better than the absolute bare minimum proposed by the UK government, but still has issues. No recognition of non-binary people, no consideration of how to deal with trans minors etc.

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