

Written evidence submitted by Ms Elizabeth Sice [GRA1432]

1. No, the government has not met its aim. From where I'm looking it appears like they capitulated to press bigotry. The two-year requirement to 'verify,' one's own identity, isn't based on any rationality and often for those in precarious living situations, it is actually simply impossible. It's hardly more straightforward either, considering years of 'evidence,' are still required to verify our own identity. It's more straightforward, although, still fairly annoying for one to amend one's passport, under the current system. The process to get a GRC is something of a joke, considering one needs to submit two years of fairly difficult to gather evidence, provided one isn't in employment. For example, my situation, my parents wouldn't accept my identity for about a year all in all, which meant that despite seeking out medical care, I'd lack the evidence to get a GRC, despite being medically and socially transitioned outside the home. A situation which was, not my fault.
2. The fee probably shouldn't exist, considering how expensive the rest of the process can be, a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and a letter from a doctor, can cost anywhere from £300 to £1,000 by itself. The requirements themselves are expensive for a vulnerable community that is more likely to be unemployed than the general public. A diagnosis and letter could be free; however, the NHS system currently moves at a glacial pace, I was referred in 2019 to the adult service, having been on the children's service waiting list for a year or so, and I still haven't been seen.
3. I think it should, since it is expensive and difficult. I have an instinct to keep it to remove fears some people have about the system being abused. However, we have to look at the application of similar systems abroad. Those systems haven't been abused by bad actors in the slightest, so following an evidence-based approach we should be looking at the data from other countries and use their systems to model our own, which entails the removal of such a requirement as far as I'm aware.
4. Absolutely. As far as I'm concerned this is the single largest barrier to trans people being legally recognised in the gender they are. You've already heard my situation but I don't think it's that uncommon, when you have a father who won't accept your new name, how are you supposed to gather evidence while living with them. The system is archaic, and designed for a time when trans people were older, already in employment and out of their parents' home, for younger trans people that isn't a possibility. Equally plenty of trans people are unemployed or homeless as a result of wider transphobia. Put simply the task of gathering evidence is an undue burden on a community that would find it difficult. This is equally to say nothing of the dehumanising element of justifying your identity and providing evidence of it, a process that would not be expected of any cis person. A cis person is assigned their gender freely and easily with no requirement to prove it, the current GRC system is pretty plainly discriminatory, and treats trans people as bad actors without cause or evidence.
5. The Statutory Declaration, as I understand it pertains to passports and the process used to change one's gender marker on that. Though if I'm wrong feel free to disregard. I think it's a relatively good system, though acquiring the evidence for that is difficult in its own way.
6. I believe it should be removed. It's grounded in an understanding of trans-ness and trans rights that traces itself back to *Cobett v. Cobett*, a terrible and discriminatory ruling that set the stage for much of the conversation about trans rights that still seems to happen today. Change of gender can be reason for divorce but acquiring a GRC should not be so intimately tied to marriage as it is, and it's grounded in, as usual a fundamentally outdated understanding of trans people and trans rights. It should be removed and the dissolution of marriage should be carried out through the usual channels; divorce.

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7. I don't think change is necessary on the age front. Though there should be a framework akin to that in Ireland to allow for certificates to be issued to minors under special circumstances. Rather the Irish system provides in my opinion a good framework for handling minors in such cases.
8. Not much at all, the retention of the two years requirement of evidence is as I said, the biggest barrier, so long as that remains the system of GRCs is simply not fit for purpose. Online application may be partially useful, but the system is so flawed and outdated that small changes like that won't do much to change the fundamental issues. The two-year requirement is discriminatory and not based in any evidence we can see from systems of gender change in other parts of the world.
9. Removal of the two year 'real life experience,' requirement, as an undue, discriminatory, and outdated limit on gender change, that treats trans people largely as bad actors looking to exploit the system. The removal of the spousal veto. A framework for minors to change their gender through a GRC, though this framework should be designed for use by minors specifically. Potentially the removal of medical evidence. This coming of course, in addition to the currently proposed changes. Should the government undertake this course of action it would undoubtedly improve my life and the lives of people like me. Though I have my fears and doubts that the media environment won't listen to evidence and continue to push and publish hysteria placing pressure on the government.
10. I'm not Scottish, so I'm not really knowledgeable on the debate. Though ironically due to the difficulties in seeking treatment I travel from London to Edinburgh and back in a day to access medical care. So long as it removes the two-year requirement as a start then it would be leaps and bounds better than anything the UK government has proposed.
11. Because of the process, because it's difficult to gather two years of evidence, because it's a dehumanising process, because for plenty of people it's pretty unnecessary. I know that as it stands, I won't be able to apply for one because of my family situation. In plenty of ways, I would argue that the system is ignorant to what it is like to live as a trans person in Britain today, we're more likely to be unemployed or the victims of crime, or live in bad situations that make the gathering of evidence, and changing university forms, and bank statements even more so. You'll never know the fear of your dad finding a letter that is in your affirmed name and getting into an argument and more besides, like I do. The requirements are not built for the trans people in Britain today, and must be changed to better suit the times, despite whatever vitriol The Times has to spew about the matter.
12. The Equality Act functions well in protecting trans rights, though there are plenty of issues regarding wrongful termination and hate crimes that I have anecdotally heard. That being said I would argue that it's certainly ineffective at making trans people feel protected under the law, recent polls indicate that many trans people feel afraid to use the rights they have to use bathrooms etc. as outlined in the Equality Act, on account of wider societal transphobia which often goes unchallenged. How do you think it would feel for your government to backtrack on promises on the basis of transphobic hysteria rather than evidence? It certainly wouldn't make you feel safe that your rights would be upheld or protected. While the Equality act is important, it is ineffective in some ways, at making trans people feel safe and happy to participate in public life, and this is borne out by polls from our community.

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13. Well I think we need to be explicit in what gender reassignment means as a protected characteristic, I feel as though any movement to allow spaces to discriminate on birth sex would both embolden an already bold transphobic movement across the UK and make it feel, and be more difficult for trans people to participate in public life. The inhumanity of bathroom bills has been discussed at length abroad, and it would be a dark path for our country to go down for such actions to be pursued. Certainly, I'd have to consider moving away, I don't want to have to make a choice between breaking the law or using a public restroom. Something I have been doing without incident for the past year and a half. Frankly I'd rather be left alone and treated with respect, and respect towards my gender, something cis people are able to take for granted.
14. It does protect trans people through its text. Its inadequacies lie in how few trans people know our rights many of us don't know we are protected to use changing rooms and bathrooms in line with our gender identity. Though many of us are too scared to actually use those rights. I miss swimming, but I don't feel brave enough to swim before I've had the surgery. I don't want to be harassed or stared at just for being me. I used to swim frequently before and even though my right to use facilities is enshrined in law I still don't feel comfortable. If I used the changing rooms in line with my birth sex, the men's room then I have to deal with my chest and well, with male violence, something that every woman needs to worry about. If I used the women's changing room in line with the Equality Act and the gender I am, I'd fear being shouted at, challenged or harassed for my gender identity. The law isn't the problem, people are, transphobia is a massive issue in British society and before trans people can feel comfortable in enjoying the rights and protections laid out in the Equality Act something needs to be done to deal with that transphobia.
15. In accessing healthcare for transition, I haven't had that many issues aside from the massive NHS waiting lists that have forced me to use expensive private alternatives. In accessing other healthcare, I haven't found that many issues, although I'm often assumed female, by other doctors, which is interesting, and it makes me feel more comfortable to use NHS services. Indeed, the more my blood test forms don't make note of my being trans, the more at ease I feel. If my blood tests say 'routine bloods,' rather than 'transgender blood hormone levels,' I feel like I'm treated more, for lack of a better word normally, though that isn't to say that healthcare professionals outside of trans stuff haven't been the very picture of professionalism. In terms of accessing other services however, I lack much experience so I don't feel as though there's much I can say.
16. Yes. I have plenty of non-binary friends who don't know where to start with anything, they're treated badly when seeking medical care; even worse than me, and have no pathway for legal recognition. It's obscene that people who come within the normal frame of human variation can be so strangely ignored. There should be a pathway for an X on birth certificates, though I'd leave this up to them, I know they'd speak better and more passionately about what needs to be done than I would ever be able to.

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