

Submission to The Women's and Equalities Committee Inquiry into the reform of The Gender Recognition Act

I am a post-operative trans woman aged 67, retired civil servant, married with two sons. I am submitting this as I truly believe that the Gender Reform Act should be simplified and, in doing so, provide dignity for all trans people.

For the purposes of this submission, I have included the terms trans woman, trans man, non-binary, gender-fluid and gender-questioning within my definition of 'trans'.

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

The Government's proposals do not go far enough. It's a case of too little too late. Online transactions in other areas of government/public relationships have been around for two decades.

- *Should a fee for obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate be removed or retained?*

Removed is most desirable, however a nominal fee (£20-30), perhaps to cover new birth certificate, is acceptable. Current fee of £140 is far too high for most people.

- *Are there other financial burdens on applicants that could be removed or retained?*

Name change fees in some cases, replacement passports fee, medical fees (blood tests for HRT have not been free for me, for example).

- *Should the requirement for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria be removed?*

Yes. This should be done in line with other countries where there have been no issues, even after several years. For example Ireland, Denmark, Malta, Argentina.

The current wait for assessment for a diagnosis is prohibitively long in the UK, with queues topping 4-5 years, during which time trans people are without necessary rights and freedoms.

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

The point of this restriction is very unclear, and is probably a nod to those who doubt the reality of the trans experience. It should be removed as a requirement as the GRC is a legal document. Gathering evidence for a two-year lived experience is very difficult, especially in this time of online interaction with organisations with which you conduct your business and day-to-day lives.

- *What is your view of the statutory declaration and should any changes have been made to it?*

As this is a legal document I have no issues at this time. It would be valuable to some trans people as proof of commitment to transition.

- *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?*

This requirement needs removal. Neither my wife nor I could see the point of this requirement. If she didn't complete one, she could use my GRC as grounds for divorce. But she doesn't want to divorce me, so where's the logic? What is the value to the Panel of this piece of information?

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

A person who transitions when under the age of 18 should be afforded the same rights. The GRC is not a passport to medical intervention, which could take years to achieve, just a certificate of identity, so yes, it should, perhaps with parental review and consent.

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

Trans people have suffered for many years and for far too long without the necessary reforms to the GRA and GRC. The reforms need to be far more reaching and be for the benefit of trans people, not a penalty for having been born trans. If the full range of proposed changes, not just the token points indicated by Liz Truss, the mental health of our trans people, and especially those who have not yet

summoned the courage to express their dysphoria, will improve enormously. Even, I would say, to the point of decreasing the rate of suicide amongst trans people, young and old alike.

- *What else should the Government have included in its proposals, if anything?*

There should be a rethink on the purpose of the Gender Recognition Panel, the make-up of which, by not including trans people, is rather insulting to the community. You would not have a panel making decisions around racial or disability issues without people of colour, or disabled people, for example. The process really should be purely a process of form filling and ticking boxes, with some evidence submission. The result should be a changed birth certificate and not a permanent entry on some government database.

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

Yes.

Wider issues concerning transgender equality and current legislation:

- *Why is the number of people applying for GRCs so low compared to the number of people identifying as transgender?*

For all of the reasons stated in the answers above. The process is not only long-winded but degrading, intimidating and often insulting, especially when contact is made between the panel and the applicant, as I know from experiences of a friend.

- *Are there challenges in the way the Gender Recognition Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010 interact? For example, in terms of the different language and terminology used across both pieces of legislation.*

Possibly in the way terms are used and their definitions. A metadata document could resolve these issues without the need for changes to the Acts themselves.

- *Are the provisions in the Equality Act for the provision of single-sex and separate-sex spaces and facilities in some circumstances clear and useable for service providers and service users? If not, is reform or further guidance needed?*

So that attacks by the gender-critical movement can be minimised or, better still for our mental health's sake, eliminated, more clarity by the government is needed that trans people are NOT excluded by the term 'single-sex', and that we have used single-sex spaces for decades without issue.

- *Does the Equality Act adequately protect trans people? If not, what reforms, if any, are needed*

It would seem to protect most trans people, but I know there are feelings around the treatment of trans people within the justice system. My knowledge of this is not adequate to provide a satisfactory answer.

- *What issues do trans people have in accessing support services, including health and social care services, domestic violence and sexual violence services?*

I have had no issues accessing any services except for the NHS. I have experienced long wait times, (which at my age of 67 is not ideal), confusion and complete lack of knowledge by medical staff, and complete refusal to provide support by entering into a shared care agreement, and outright refusal to provide post-op support. This has spilled over into non trans-related medical issues that have come about because of this lack of support. It is barely believable that NHS personnel cannot, in the 21st century, take on board the scientific fact that people are born, and not 'become' transgender.

- *Are legal reforms needed to better support the rights of gender-fluid and non-binary people? If so, how?*

As stated at the top of this submission, I have included trans women, trans men, non-binary, gender-fluid and gender-questioning in my definition of 'trans'. They therefore should be afforded all the rights and protections as discussed for trans people. The Acts, and any metadata, should be amended accordingly.