

Response to government consultation on proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act

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

No, for those who want to change their gender, this is a very serious decision, with long term, and often irreversible, consequences. It requires very careful thought over a long period. It is therefore not 'kind' to make this too quick and easy, as this will undoubtedly lead to many people taking a step they will later regret and wish to reverse. However, if drugs and surgery have been employed, full reversal may not be possible.

It is also not 'kind' to facilitate those who want to abuse the system to gain access to women only spaces.

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?

A fee should be retained. This reflects the seriousness of the decision.

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

Definitely not. It is a huge and serious decision, and one which needs very careful assessment because of the serious mental health risks associated with transitioning. The increasing numbers of people who regret their decision to transition and are now choosing to detransition indicates that careful assessment is required. Many detransitioners report that they thought that changing their gender would resolve their mental health problems, but found that it did not help. We should not rush to affirm transgender feelings without careful assessment of mental health issues.

A diagnosis of gender dysphoria would also help protect against those who wish to abuse the system to gain access to women only spaces. The legal safeguard of a diagnosis reflects the seriousness of what is involved.

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

No, two years is, if anything, too short a time period living in the assumed gender. This period of reflection acts as a safeguard for the person, reducing the likelihood that they will take a decision they later come to regret.

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

There should still be a requirement for a medical diagnosis and a period of two years living as the opposite gender before a person takes this radical step. On its own, a statutory self-declaration is not enough. Since many people change their minds and choose to detransition, a statutory declaration should be fully reversible, so the person can fully revert to their birth sex at a later point, should they wish to do so.

Written evidence submitted by Morgan [GRA1487]

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?

No, definitely not. A person's decision to transition affects others too, as well as the wider society. It is vital to preserve the current protection for the spouse so that they are not forced against their will into a 'same sex marriage'. Many people disagree with same sex marriage, and their rights should also be considered.

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

No, definitely not. Children and young people below the age of 18 don't have the maturity needed to understand and consider all aspects of this decision and how it might affect them in the future, mentally, physically and spiritually. Research suggests that the brain doesn't fully mature before the age of 25.

Young people must be protected from the effects of social contagion and immature experimentation. Over the last decade there has been a huge increase in young people experimenting with the idea of changing gender, and sometimes whole friendship groups have progressed together down this line.

The current age limit reflects the fact that this is a very serious decision, and it must be kept.

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

I fear that more people will be encouraged to take a decision they may later regret and more people will maliciously abuse the system which gives them easy access to women only spaces.

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

Consideration of how to protect children and young people from social contagion in relation to transgender issues.

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

Many people, particularly young people, but also those who are older who experience unhappiness and poor mental health, may be experimenting with the idea that they may feel better about themselves and happier if they adopt the opposite gender.

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