

Written evidence submitted by Mr Charles Lee [GRA1516]

Hello I'm Charles Lee, an 18 year old trans man who has been out as trans for three years now. As someone who will apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate, I am personally invested in the legislation surrounding it and the need for reforms to said legislation.

I think the Gender Recognition Act should be reformed to be free. £140 is a cruel amount to expect trans people to pay for something every cis person gets for free. And in addition to this, the idea that trans people can't be poor or under financial stress is insulting. I know many trans people who have to claim disability benefits which stop them being allowed to have a certain amount of money in their possession, or they will lose their benefits. This means that paying for much better and quicker trans healthcare is impossible as the high rates for private care exceed the amount of money they're allowed to have without losing the benefits they need to live. Similarly, trans people who's families deny them financial support because of their trans status have to build up their own finances from the ground with no support and will be worse off financially than their family supported cis peers. The idea that trans people don't experience additional financial stresses like this and should be put under even more financial stress for something they desperately need is unfair and should be removed.

In addition asking a community that is constantly barred for workplaces because of transphobia to pay for their right to be legally recognised as themselves is irresponsible and shows a lack of understanding for the average trans person's living situation. So I once again implore the government to remove financial barriers for accessing a gender recognition certificate.

Secondly, despite being out for three years and having been on a GIC waiting list for all of my adult life and most of my late teenage years I have yet to have even one appointment with a GIC because of their long waiting lists. And even when I am seen, having to prove that I experience dysphoria to a doctor will be a long and difficult process. Dysphoria is something subjective and different for each individual and often gender euphoria is a much better indicator of whether someone is trans or not. In addition to these needs for demedicalising the gender recognition act cis people are always taken at face value when they say that they're men or women and aren't forced to have their gender be validated by a doctor before it's legally recognised. The fact that trans people have to jump through medical hoops after years of waiting is unfair. A diagnosis of gender dysphoria should not be a prerequisite for legal gender recognition.

A way to avoid medicalising and gatekeeping something that should not be medicalised or gatekept would be to make the statutory declaration the main vehicle for legal gender recognition. If reworded and reworked by the government in touch with trans people, this could sidestep some of the current problems with the Gender Recognition Act.

Something else that should be changed is the spousal veto. Scotland has already done away with this outdated legislation and England should follow suit. The idea that someone's gender identity can be used as grounds for divorce in and of itself is ridiculous.

Regarding age, I knew I was a man at age 15 with the same conviction that the cis boys in my class did, but I am only now legally able to seek recognition for who I am. As such I think the age at which someone can file for a GRC should be lowered to 16. Asking trans youth to wait two years before they can file for a GRC is something that could be avoided.

In terms of what I think about the current proposed changes to the GRA, I think they're ultimately inconsequential reforms and it has been degrading that we were made to waste so much time and effort for such a lack of meaningful change. The tokenistic nature of the surface-level proposed changes highlights an alarming lack of accountability from the Minister and the Government as a

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whole when it comes to the needs of trans communities within the UK. If so many responses can be simply dismissed as they don't chime with the Minister's desired outcome, it doesn't bode well for the UK population's feeling genuinely listened to when engaging via democratic channels. It may initially appear hyperbolic, but it does a great deal of intractable damage to any trust between trans people and this government, furthering our current lack thereof.

In addition, the fact that nonbinary people are not recognised by the GRC is disgusting. Nonbinary identity is not some new phase that's taken over the youth- there are many nonbinary people in their thirties and forties who are unable to legally be recognised as such by the government despite the fact that they financially support the government through taxes and have jobs that contribute to society. A society that refuses to legally recognise them as nonbinary. When I first started attending trans groups as a teenager, older nonbinary activists were the people who protected me and encouraged me to be more comfortable and confident in my identity. And my nonbinary peers, who include aspiring politicians, people studying engineering degrees and those going into nursing and social care were my friends and moral support when my transphobic classmates put me through the worst years of my life. The idea that this vital part of the trans community is being left behind to rot because they are nonbinary and the government refuses to recognise that is wrong. The entirety of the trans community should be supported by the GRA and that includes those of us that are nonbinary, genderfluid, bigender or otherwise identified.

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