

Written evidence submitted by Peters [GRA1691]

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

The answer to this seems very obvious to anyone who has experienced anything to do with the process of obtaining a GRC, whether for themselves or through watching a friend do it. It is a hard, painful, dehumanising, and mentally damaging process which requires you to act out your gender to a collection of strangers, so that they can judge whether they think you are "girl enough" or "boy enough" for whatever their preconceptions of those concepts are?

To be very clear, it is ridiculous not to allow a trans person to self-identify their own gender. Quite apart from it being hugely triggering to people with dysphoria or mental health issues to have to get somebody else tell them if they are trans or not, there appears to be no benefit to prizing the judgement of others over the judgement of the person in question.

Anti-trans activists will offer specious arguments about it being necessary to "ensure people aren't making a mistake" and "protecting same-sex services from malicious actors," but the truth is that self-declaration has been in effect in many nations for many years, including Ireland, Norway, Denmark, Portugal, and Belgium. There has been no recorded impact in these countries on women-only services, no recorded issues with bathrooms/changing rooms/other single-sex spaces, and no recorded issues of problems caused by people not having to wait 2 years to decide. The main effect has been a reduction in the number of trans suicides.

The evidence from other nations that have adopted self-declaration clearly shows that fear-mongering from anti-trans activist has no basis in fact. The only reason not to allow it is to pander to an obstreperous minority at the expense of a vulnerable community.

The current Acts are cruel in several areas. The requirement for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria is outdated and archaic. Not all trans people have dysphoria and to invalidate those who don't (or to force them to act it for a doctor in order to be able to access medical or documentary support) is wicked. In addition, this requirement is highly subjective - I have had friends who do have dysphoria who have been rejected a diagnosis because a capricious doctor didn't believe that they felt it strongly enough when he saw them.

I would also call cruel the requirement to live in their true gender for two years. Imagine being outed and risking abuse, mockery, or assault every time you had to present your driving licence, passport, bank card, or any other type of documentation, because you had only been public about your gender for eighteen months. The old saw of anti-trans activists is that, "It will make sure people are sure," but this is clearly nonsense - if we remove it, the worst consequence is that someone who was not sure and changed their mind will have to change their driving licence back again. Hardly a tragedy.

In addition, why does the spouse of a trans person have veto power? Why do they get to decide if another person is a particular gender. If they want to divorce them because they're not happy to stay married to a man or a woman, I can absolutely understand that. I don't understand why they are legally allowed to say, "No, they're not a man," and have their opinion stand for more than anyone else's.

Finally, the ignoring of non-binary people is an egregious hole in the law. Non-binary people exist. I have seen them. Yet then are entirely unrecognised by the UK, despite their continued existence. This means that, for a lot of legally-binding paperwork, they are currently required to lie. They often must fill in legally binding documentation with the wrong title, the wrong name, and the wrong gender.

As with self-declaration, the question must be asked of the benefits of continuing to deny the existence of non-binary trans people. What advantage does it give the UK not to do this? Who will benefit from them being excluded?

The Government's proposed changes do make some improvement to the process, but they are tweaking the bureaucracy, rather than acknowledging that most of it can be utterly obviated by acknowledging that people are who they say they are, as has been done in several other countries with no negative effects. Why not save money, save lives, improve the happiness of thousands of Britons and follow a path trodden by many of our European neighbours which has had no negative effects?

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