

Written evidence submitted by Luke Hammill [GRA1752]

My name is Luke Hammill, I live in the North East of England, I'm 22 and have been in question of my gender and identity for the past year now. Through out my life learning about non-binary and trans-gender people were rarely discussed and if it ever was it ended up being quickly brushed away. This meant through out my life the thoughts of my non-binary or possible trans identity had never come up I. It was never considered. Everything seemed natural until I finally discussed gender identity with others online. This then helped highlight thoughts, feeling and actions, during my earlier life. One example being a possible contribution to my persistent comfortableness and depression which had been untreated for a long time. If access, support and knowledge on the subject was better presented and available at a younger age it may have very well helped improve my current mental health and even my situation in life. With my teenage years being when I remember the signs the most, reducing the age limit and time required as the acquired gender would have helped shape me and better prepare me for the future,

Originally when I started leaning about gender identity I found that many trans individuals weren't neurotypical and likely suffered from depression and anxiety. As an individual who suffered from both I understood them and why having to through the current processes to have identification changed. To acknowledge that they were allowed to be their correct gender deemed by a panel, this would weigh on me and stress me greatly. As such it then effecting my own decisions on identity as I'm not wanting to go through this stress and worry. Which is already at a high due to the health of loved ones, daily requirements and not to mention my financial situation. Meaning I have to take that fee into consideration too along with.

For many individuals I have spoke too and myself, being able to be certified as we identify helps provide a sense of relief/reducing discomfort when identifying ourselves for documentation. This is something cis-gender people will likely never experience or be impacted by. So to many individuals it is consider an important part of ourselves. However Commonly trans-gender individuals are likely to be lower income individuals and are more like to receive discrimination when seeking housing, so many individuals may be unable to pay the fees associated with the gender recognition certificate. By removing the fee's and stress associated with the GRC individuals not only have a better experience but will be placing less burdens on ourselves and mental health services which many will use.

Many GRC stories discourage individuals from applying due to how they hated the speed, the process and means in which the system is set up. Many individuals don't want to be told that I can be who I am, myself included. It pushes people away from applying and towards internalised judgement. This combined with the lack of support/acknowledgement when ever non-binary or trans-gender individuals have brought up issues of discrimination, assault and many more to the relevant authorities. This then goes on to effect many other things such as social care or mental health support which is already struggling/ lacking in my local area.

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