

## **Written evidence submitted by Dr Blake Gutt [GRA 1807]**

I am a transgender man. Six years ago, I changed my legal name simply and for free by signing a deed poll in front of two witnesses. The fact that this process was easy did not make it a less significant occasion in my life. I remember vividly the solemnity and excitement of declaring who I was and adopting my new name, knowing that the law considered me the final authority on my own identity. The ease of the process certainly did not mean that I took it lightly; the decision to change my name followed more than a year of consideration. Changing one's legal gender should be exactly this straightforward, and should be available to everyone, regardless of age.

Gender Recognition Certificates should be made available through a self-identification process, as is the case in the Republic of Ireland. Gender Recognition Certificates are required only for a narrow range of processes (such as alteration of a birth certificate or ensuring incarcerated trans people are housed with others of their identified gender). Many other procedures, such as changing the gender marker on medical records, passports and driving licences, are possible without a GRC. Gatekeeping the remaining functions through the GRC application process is simply illogical, and serves only to make trans people's lives more difficult. Trans people such as myself are recognised as our identified gender everywhere in everyday life, from bank accounts to hospital ID bracelets, without a GRC. Therefore, reforms are needed to make GRCs simple and straight-forward to attain. Furthermore, the current process makes no sense – why do I need to pay for a panel of “expert” strangers to tell the government that I am who I say I am? The process is demeaning, humiliating and medicalising, and the need to pay a fee renders the GRC less accessible to those who are not well off. It should be no more expensive or burdensome to be transgender than it is to be cisgender. All requirements for a GRC other than self-certification must therefore be removed.

It is vital that the UK fully recognise the existence and validity of non-binary gender, with a non-binary gender marker available on all documentation that requires a gender marker. This documentation itself should be reduced to a minimum. There is rarely, if ever, a legitimate need for the government to monitor the sex/gender of the population.

The spousal consent provision in the Gender Recognition Act is regressive. It is an entirely unnecessary hurdle that should be eliminated.

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