

Written evidence submitted by Mr James Webster [GRA1884]

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

I believe that these changes would make the process kinder and simpler.

I also believe that still more could be done to support trans people, including better education, support and more than the proposed funding to services support transgender people.

Question: 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?

I believe the fee should be removed - it is currently an unnecessary obstacle to healthcare and great harm could be reduced by removing it.

Further, many trans people incur additional costs of updating identification documents, traveling to and from appointments, or using private healthcare as the waiting lists are long and services are underfunded.

Travel costs could be reimbursed, grants could potentially be provided, fees for new identification or deed polls could be dropped for trans people.

Question: Should the requirement for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria be removed?

Yes, I believe this requirement should be removed. Not all trans people have dysphoria, indeed many experience instead a sense of *euphoria* at living in their correct gender.

Many trans people also find it difficult to get a diagnosis, often because the distress of having to live as a gender that doesn't fit can cause issues like depression or anxiety, which can mask the dysphoria or make clinicians reluctant to diagnose. Most evidence suggests that transition will actually decrease the severity of these symptoms, potentially saving

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lives.

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

I believe this should be shortened or removed entirely.

Primarily, I hold this opinion because it isn't *safe* for all trans people to live as their correct gender. They may face potential fallout from family, church, friends, or contemporaries at school/work. They may fear hate crime (which has risen massively in the UK over the last 5 years).

Many trans people may be somewhere on the non-binary/genderqueer spectrum, also, which means that living full-time as one binary gender may still be distressing and harmful.

In many cases, especially amongst those who fear hate crime, having legal recognition could be a massive benefit to their mental health and wellbeing. It may also make people feel safer living as their true gender (especially given current moral panics that make trans people afraid to use toilets).

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

I believe that trans people should be able to declare their own gender.

I believe that having to submit evidence to a panel is intrusive and harmful gatekeeping.

Question: 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?

I believe the spousal consent provision should be removed.

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I do not think anyone should be able to hold their partner or spouse hostage in a gender role that harms them, which is what this provision currently does.

I note that as Baroness Barker put it last year: "No other marriage-changing event, such as relocating or converting to a religion or declaring oneself bankrupt, or even changing one's name, requires such consent."

I do not believe that anything new would be needed to protect the partner's rights, as doing so would place extra barriers in front of trans people that do not exist for others. I believe this is discriminatory.

Question: Should the age limit at which people can apply for a GRC be lowered?

I believe the limit should be lowered to 16.

Best evidence all suggests that allowing younger people to apply for/receive a GRC could save lives.

Question: What impact will these changes have on those people applying for a GRC, and on trans people more generally?

I believe these changes will make it somewhat easier and less stressful to apply for a GRC, and do some good in making a clear but limited statement of support for trans people.

I believe that this impact will be small in comparison to what could be accomplished with larger changes, such as greater support in education, counseling and pastoral support, funding to trans health services, and legal protection.

Given the terrifying rise of trans-related hate crime, I believe dramatic and sustained action is required to support trans people and save lives.

Question: What else should the Government have included in its proposals, if anything?

I believe that these proposals should have included:

- legal recognition for non-binary people, such as the inclusion of a 'Non-binary/NB' option on passports and inclusion of the title 'Mx' on official paperwork.
- the right to self-declare your gender identity
- funding to open even more GIC clinics
- more support and education in schools for young trans people

Question: Does the Scottish Government's proposed Bill offer a more suitable alternative to reforming the Gender Recognition Act 2004?

I would find the Scottish Government's proposed Bill to be a more suitable alternative (but also believe it could go further).

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

I believe this is due to long waiting lists, unnecessary medical gatekeeping, barriers (such as stigma or safety or lack of support) that prevent people from living in their true gender for 2+ years, and costs of application and secondary costs such as travel/deed polls.

I think the level of stigma also makes people afraid to stick their heads above the parapet in communities that aren't known to be safe.

Question: Are there challenges in the way the Gender Recognition Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010 interact?

Yes, the two acts contain conflicting definition, which are open to both

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confusion and exploitation.

Question: Are the provisions in the Equality Act for the provision of single-sex and separate-sex spaces and facilities in some circumstances clear and useable for service providers and service users? If not, is reform or further guidance needed?

I believe that these provisions are not at all clear.

I would like to see them reformed so that they cannot be used to incite fear and panic against trans people, who frequently receive abuse or harassment in such facilities.

Question: Does the Equality Act adequately protect trans people? If not, what reforms, if any, are needed?

I believe that it does not adequately protect trans people.

I believe that non-binary people deserve to be explicitly protected. Further, I believe that consideration should be given to protecting trans people who do not intend to go through invasive physical transition, but are still transitioning socially.

Question: What issues do trans people have in accessing support services, including health and social care services, domestic violence and sexual violence services?

Question: Are legal reforms needed to better support the rights of gender-fluid and non-binary people? If so, how?

Yes, I believe they could be given the option to be legally recognised as non-binary and include this on identification and medical records etc.

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I believe the Equality Act could also be reformed to explicitly mention and protect non-binary and gender-fluid people.

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