

## Written evidence submitted by Ms Anya North [GRA1892]

When the Gender Recognition act was introduced, I was in that period of my life when I was overwhelmed with the joyful but exhausting task of looking after my 3 young children. It is only relatively recently, that it has come to my attention that our law makers passed such a monumentally daft piece of legislation and that they did this without fully considering its effect on women and girls.

To be fair the the legislators I think that it was thought that the existence of the GRA would make it easier for those with a very specific condition (body dysmorphia). Unfortunately this change in the law has heralded changes which undermine many of the improvements in the lives of women and girls that had been hard fought for over the preceding centuries.

### **Why am I interested in potential changes to the GRA?**

I am a woman of slight stature and from a young age have experienced intimidating behaviour from people of the sex category: men. The behaviour varies from whistles and beeping of car horns to one one occasion a totally unprovoked fist in the face from a total stranger which happened in broad daylight. Also as a child I was tripped up by a man and whilst I was getting up he 'flashed' his genitalia near my face.

I am therefore very wary of men and appreciate single sex spaces for changing and when using the toilet. Single sex spaces do offer protection as it is clear that men can be challenged if they were to enter. If 'self-id' were introduced it would become very difficult to challenge people of the male sex who had entered into those spaces as any male could just claim that they identify as a woman.

Thankfully I have never had to go to prison or use a women's refuge but if I did need to I'm sure that I would be very uncomfortable being required to share that space with someone male (even if they did identify as a woman (what ever that means)).

Since my children have grown up, I have finally been able to develop my own sporting talents and it has become very clear to me how much stronger and faster men become with very little training compared to women. I have really enjoyed working hard at my chosen sport and sometimes becoming better than other women of a similar age to myself. If those who were born male are allowed to i-d as a woman and enter the same sporting category as women, then in my sport, women are very unlikely to place highly. This would be disappointing. Much more dangerous though, would be where people born male are allowed to enter sporting competitions which involve contact. Members of the committee are no doubt aware of the very extensive research done by world rugby which showed the peril that women would face if they are tackled by a person who has gone through male puberty.

I am happy for people to self-identify as what ever they like but I find it abhorrent that everyone else is expected to deny the truth that is right in front of them. In fact, very often, the person doesn't even have to be in front of me. I can hear whether it is a man or a woman even if they are walking behind me. When one has been subjected to unprovoked violence, it is impossible to ignore potential threats so like many women, I have a heightened sense of risk which does constrain my ability to take part in activities on occasions.

Here then I find another objectionable thing about 'gender recognition'. There appears to be some expectation that the person 'lives as the other gender.' I have seen supporters of transgender ideology trying to explain this, but whenever they try to do, they revert to hideous stereotypes which I had thought were fading into the background in the 1980s. Sadly for them, it is not possible to change sex. From what I have seen, it is not really very possible to even make a good proximity of the opposite sex.

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I know that I run the risk of being branded a ‘terf’ but I think that if the review of legislation is to be effective, anyone making decisions about this should acquaint themselves with the term ‘autogynophilia’ and its meaning. While it would be very wrong to state that all trans women have this condition, one cannot spend too much time on Twitter engaging with Trans-rights proponents before one realises that a high proportion of trans women have this paraphilia.

I think it is really unkind to give people the impression that they will be believed as being the opposite sex. Why should people put themselves through punishing (and expensive) surgery or drug regimes to be accepted? To be kind, I think we should be accepting of people however they decide to present. But it should remain clear to them that they remain their original sex and should use sex-segregated facilities where this is expected for the privacy and dignity of the opposite sex. Furthermore, I don’t think that there should be any expectation that others are to accept a ‘trans’ person as a sexual partner if they are not attracted to them. I find it particularly upsetting to hear that young lesbian women are being pressured into relationships with transwomen who i-d as lesbian and are being told that they are ‘transphobic’ if they do not acquiese.

It is particularly cruel in the case of children to give the impression that it is possible to change sex. I am grateful that the government has (for now) stated that this type of propaganda should be outlawed in schools.

If the government really wants to help ‘trans’ people then they should be fostering a climate where men and women are accepted as wearing what ever they like and doing what ever hobbies or activities they like (within the law obvs). They should not be agreeing that a life long interest in lip-stick and high heels means that a person is a woman for example. If men want to wear such items – I hope it brings them joy, but it doesn’t make them a woman.

The category ‘woman’ is used in law and I think its use should be restricted only to those who are adult human females. Without a fixed definition, it is impossible to gather accurate statistics about health, lifestyle, offending rates and therefore, makes it difficult to formulate public policies and make provision such as hospitals and prisons. I value the the words ‘woman’ and ‘mother.’ Being a woman has a profound effect on how I am viewed by others and my biology has deeply affected the course of my life. Understanding what a woman is and recognising that some services can only operate effectively if their use is restricted to biological women only is vitally important.

If the Government is intent on making it easier to self-identify, then they should be clear that this does not mean automatic entry into single sex spaces. Where necessary the government should ensure that there is a mix of provision ie male, female and gender neutral so that people of all views can be comfortably accommodated.

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