

I am a cisgender woman who has transgender and non-binary friends, and am an ally to the LGBTQIA community. The wellbeing of trans and non-binary people is important to me and so I wanted my opinion to be heard in this consultation.

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

The proposed changes are a very small step in the right direction, but there is much more that could be done to make the process kinder and more straightforward. For example, removing the requirement of a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria and evidence that a person has lived in their new gender for at least 2 years. There is no good reason to keep these requirements and complying with them can be cumbersome and distressing.

- **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?**

The fee should be removed, in order that no-one is prevented from obtaining a GRC due to lack of financial means. There are other costs that many trans people have to cover such as costs for updating driving licenses, passports and birth certificates. Ideally these fees would also be removed.

- **Should the requirement for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria be removed?**

Yes. You do not need to experience gender dysphoria to be trans. And for those who do experience dysphoria, going through the process of getting a medical diagnosis can be difficult due to lack of specialists in this field. It can be distressing having to "prove" yourself to a medical professional and people who wish to obtain a GRC should not be forced to go through this process if they do not wish to.

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

Yes, this requirement should be removed. It is unfair for anyone to be given the power to dictate what it means for someone else to "live as a man" or "live as a woman". It is very likely that any such judgement will rely on stereotypes about what it is to be "masculine enough" or "feminine enough", stereotypes which many transgender and cisgender people alike reject. How someone chooses to present themselves has no bearing on their gender identity and the two should not be conflated.

Where there is a requirement for proof that a trans person has changed their name, this can be a barrier as not every trans person wishes to change their name, and for those that do, they may not be able to obtain documents to prove this. For example, not everyone has a passport, driving licence or payslips.

- **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?**

The spousal consent provision should be removed. Whether a trans person is able to obtain a GRC should not be dependent on the opinion of their spouse. I don't believe that a trans person obtaining a GRC would infringe on the rights of their spouse. In some cases, this step may lead to the dissolution of a marriage or civil partnership but this is a matter for the two people concerned and should not be mandated in law.

- **Should the age limit at which people can apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) be lowered?**

Yes, it would make sense to lower the age limit to at least 16. 16 is considered old enough to make such serious life choices as getting married or joining the armed forces, so it should also be considered old enough to know your own gender identity.

- **What else should the Government have included in its proposals, if anything?**

As well as the points I have noted in my other answers, the proposals should have taken into account the needs of intersex people, for example by allowing easier correction of birth certificates. This is particularly relevant to intersex people as parents of intersex children currently have to decide whether to put "male" or "female" on their child's birth certificate. Once that child is older they should have the opportunity to change that, including to a third gender option.

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

Yes. Amongst other things, the Scottish Government's proposed Bill lowers the age limit for a GRC from 18 to 16 and abolishes the requirements for medical evidence to be submitted to a Gender Recognition Panel. This bill goes further than the Government Equalities Office response and will make a more positive difference to the lives of trans people. However, it would be even more beneficial if it went further still, for example by removing the requirement for someone to have "lived in their acquired gender" at all.

Wider issues concerning transgender equality and current legislation:

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

The protected characteristic of “gender reassignment” should be replaced with a broader definition such as “gender identity” to give certainty to all members of the trans community that they are protected by the Equality Act, including those who do not wish to medically transition and those who are non-binary.

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

Yes. Non-binary and gender-fluid people should be able to access legal recognition of their gender. The fact that the only options for legal gender recognition are male and female is outdated and excludes those who do not identify with either of these binary labels, as well as making it more difficult to challenge discrimination against them.

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