

About myself: I am a transgender woman in late middle-age, born in Canada, I have been resident in the UK for 32 years. I was “part time” trans (first “occasionally”, then living as a woman full-time outside of work, but not transitioned at work) until 2012 when I was finally able to transition full-time. I worked in telecoms R&D for over 35 years, I am now mostly in retirement.

In the years before my transition in 2012 I was unhappy from having to live a “secret” life and from the impossibility of working or living in dignity as a transgender woman. I tended to “be a man” at work, but to live as a woman in my private life whenever possible. From about the late nineties transgender people started being accepted in public and I no longer had to be in fear going about the city – that was a huge relief. Harrassment and mistreatment from the police also stopped (almost completely) in the late nineties and early “noughties”. Then, when we received protection under the Equalities Act in 2010, that was a huge relief – though there was a frequent problem that, because the government did effectively *nothing* to publicise this change in the law, people and businesses often refused to believe anti-trans discrimination was illegal. Eventually many businesses learned about trans rights and things slowly improved.

From 2012, with my full-time transition, I was very happy finally to be able to live as my real self. I lived happily for several years, until the anti-trans hate campaignsthat began around 2016 (online, in the media, in political parties, etc) become more prevalent everywhere. They have succeeded through a campaign of falsehood and fear that the government turned a blind eye to for years, ... even when they made openly false statements about trans rights, the government kept silent and let the press use misinformation to create a campaign of fear and, frankly, open hatred against us.

Frankly I am now in real despair from the amount of anti-trans hatred that now prevales in this country. This organised campaign of misinformation & vilification has been escalating for several years now – it is virtually impossible to say the word “transgender” without receiving hatred and vilification in response.. This has affected the mental well-being of almost every transgender person I know, bringing some to the point of suicidality (including myself at times).

It is clear that many in the government now agree with the anti-trans groups demands that we should be banned from public services (toilets etc) and we face a return to how things were in the 1980s when we were actually in danger of arrest simply for using a toilet. This will be a disaster – I remember when things were like that and they were horrible. I frankly doubt that I will be able to sirvive returning to that. Like many other transgender people I know, I have started making plans to escape the hatred by moving abroad. But I really fear for younger transgender people who have no experience of organised legal discrimination – if/when our access to public facilities is removed, they will have no idea how to face it.

Just in case you’re thinking (as so many people say all the time) “hey, it’s no big deal if you have to use men’s toilets and changing facilities instead of womens” ... no, remember one uses a toilet sever times a day, forcing an LGBT people to publicly “out” ourselves in humiliating, degrading and, frankly, dangerous ciscumatances is a huge oppression. It makes it effectively impossible be employed, receive and education, or even travel. Or it forces us into virtual house-arrest and social isolation (like transgender people faced in the 70s & 80s). Still other will think “Well, to hell with them, I’ll just break the law” ... and they they will find how this law, like the anti-gay laws in the 1960s is a “blackmailers charter” – evidence of “routine law-breaking” will be enough to ruin the career of any teacher, lawyer, civil-servant, or basically any proffessional.

That’s why I and many others are planning to leave the country. So far, one transgender Briton has already been accepted for refugee status in a foraign country, if the proposed toilet bans are

enacted there will be many hundreds or thousands. And much despair and god knows how many suicides. This is the future that transgender people face in this country unless you reverse, the direction of travel and extend trans right rather than accepting the calls to remove transgender rights.

So, in that context, I will now respond to your 16 questions.

Re The Government's response to the GRA consultation:

Question 1. *Will the Government's proposed changes meet its aim of making the process "kinder and more straight forward"?*

No. Those promises are nothing other than a fig-leaf – they are frankly an insult. You continue to treat being transgender as if it's some sort of "mental illness" and potential "danger" to people.

Question 2. *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?*

Keep the fee only if you want to continue to oppress transgender people. Given the employment discrimination and other discrimination that transgender people face, transgender people are among those with the *least* ability to pay of anybody in society.

Question 3. *Should the requirement for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria be removed?*

Absolutely. Treating being trans as some thing that "must be confirmed by a competent authority" is an insult and a degradation. If you're afraid of people who are "faking it" then a legal oath with penalties for breaking it is *more* than adequate – i.e. the original "self id" proposals. That will be more than enough to stop any jokers pretending to be trans (mainly anti-trans protesters like "Man Friday", BTW ... that – a sworn oath with a penalty for breaking it – will be more than adequate to stop anyone "faking it" and, by accepting transgender people sworn oath, finally starts to treat us with respect and human dignity . The current approach of "we won't believe you are trans unless you get a shrink to tell us you are" is nothing more than an abusive insult to transgender people.

Question 4. *Should there be changes to the requirement for individuals to have lived in their acquired gender for at least two years?*

Yes, the current situation just creates at least two years of *hell* in every transgender person's life, unable to get a GRC but required to "live as" the gender that doesn't match our id. You probably should have some sort of brief waiting period, simply to stop the anti-trans protesters (people like "Man Friday") from playing "silly buggers" in order to abuse the process. Something like a couple of weeks till be enough to stop the jokers.

Question 5. *What is your view of the statutory declaration and should any changes have been made to it?*

It should be a statutory declaration like in the Scottish GRA-reform proposal.

Question 6. *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?*

It needs to be removed, completely. It's never helps and it is frequently just used by a malicious spouse to cause harm. Transgender people face *such* huge levels of hostility and abuse from malicious spouses, it's absolutely heartbreaking. Yes it's a tragedy in a marriage if one partner comes out as trans (or gay, TBF) and the other spouse can't accept that ... but allowing the other spouse to "veto" somebody from being trans never helps prevent harm to the marriage, and simply provides a "weapon" in the case where the other spouse wishes to cause harm.

Would you allow a spouse to "veto" their spouse coming out as gay? Of course not, that's a mixture of ridiculous and malicious. It's exactly the same to try to "veto" somebody being trans.

Spousal "veto" never helps anyone. And it frequently causes harm.

Question 7. *Should the age limit at which people can apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) be lowered?*

Yes. People can move away from home at 16. People can marry at 16, It's appropriate to include gender transition as one of the rights to go along with that.

And, in cases where there is parental support an agreement, it should be allowed younger than that.

Question 8. *What impact will these proposed changes have on those people applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate, and on trans people more generally?*

Do you mean Liz Truss's announcement? There's virtually *no* change, just a fig-leaf pretending to be a change. And the "announcement" of a "decision to provide three 'new' Gender-clinics" is simply a falsehood – we *all* know (including with plenty of documentary evidence) that those clinics have been planned for years. The announced "change" have virtually no practical effect at all, and its effect on morale is simply an insult. It created harm, not good.

Question 9. *What else should the Government have included in its proposals, if anything?*

Something very similar to the Scottish GRA proposals. They got it almost completely right. What this government has done is an insult and the perpetuation of a harmful system.

Question 10. *Does the Scottish Government's proposed Bill offer a more suitable alternative to reforming the Gender Recognition Act 2004?*

Yes, *much* better. The waiting periods are somewhat too long (1-2 weeks would be plenty to stop people who aren't serious), but otherwise, they seem to have got it just right.

Re Wider issues concerning transgender equality and current legislation:

Question 11. *Why is the number of people applying for GRCs so low compared to the number of people identifying as transgender?*

Because the process is convoluted, difficult, expensive, and degrading (treating being trans as an "illness" and trans people as "not to be believed"). You will get 10-100 times more takedown if you change it to something sensible like the process in the Scottish GRA proposal.

Question 12. *Are there challenges in the way the Gender Recognition Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010 interact? For example, in terms of the different language and terminology used across both pieces of legislation.*

No. The intent was clear. The only “confusion” comes from anti-trans groups attempts to muddy the waters. Trans men are men, trans women are women. Simply make that clear and stop them muddying the waters.

Question 13. *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?*

The intention in the Equality Act was clearly “trans women are women, trans men are men”. This is clear in the original Hansard record of debate and in the interpretation notes. Make this clear in the publicity, and in the text of the legislation.

Single-sex therefore include trans women as women, and trans men as men. As intended by the 2010 changes.

Question 14. *Does the Equality Act adequately protect trans people? If not, what reforms, if any, are needed?*

Question 15. *What issues do trans people have in accessing support services, including health and social care services, domestic violence and sexual violence services?*

Start delivering in 18 weeks. Current delays of 2-5 years are abusive and dangerous. They destroy lives.

Question 16. *Are legal reforms needed to better support the rights of gender-fluid and non-binary people? If so, how?*

Yes. Gender=X on passports. This is supported under international law and would be a simple change to allow on UK passports. The continued stubborn refusal to do something so simple that would remove distress in so many people is simply cruel. It harms nobody, and it help to remove non-binary people’s distress.

Government adoption of listing people’s preferred pronouns on business cards, online descriptions and biographies – helping this act of kindness become a standard practice. Likewise, standards requiring all government forms (paper and online) to allow title=Mx and also to all “no title” – again, setting the say in practices that respect non-binary people, providing examples for other to follow.

Requirements rolled out for provision of gender-neutral toilets.

November 2020