

News story: New Action to Promote LGBT Equality

New measures to deliver greater equality for the LGBT community have been announced by the Minister for Women and Equalities Justine Greening, ahead of the 50th anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality.

Proposals to streamline and de-medicalise the process for changing gender will be part of a broad consultation of the legal system that underpins gender transition, the Gender Recognition Act.

Currently individuals need a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and have to provide evidence that they have been in transition for at least two years before they can apply to legally change their gender.

Justine Greening also announced the launch of a national survey today (Sunday 23 July) that will ask the 1.5million LGBT people in the UK to share their views on public services to help inform Government policy.

The Government has also announced that the deferral blood donation period for men who have sex with men, will be reduced from 12 months to three months increasing the supply of donor blood available for life-saving operations.

Minister for Women and Equalities Justine Greening said:

This government is committed to building an inclusive society that works for everyone, no matter what their gender or sexuality and today we're taking the next step forward.

We will build on the significant progress we have made over the past 50 years, tackling some of the historic prejudices that still persist in our laws and giving LGBT people a real say on the issues affecting them.

Since Parliament voted for the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967, there has been significant progress on LGBT equality. In 2013 the law was changed to allow same-sex couples to marry. Earlier this year, Turing's Law was passed, posthumously pardoning men who had sex with men for these now abolished offences. And the recent election saw the highest number of openly lesbian, gay and bisexual MPs voted into Parliament. Today's announcement looks to build on this progress.

The consultation on the Gender Recognition Act, to be published in the Autumn, will look to improve the recognition process and reduce the stigma faced by the trans community. Proposals will include:

- Removing the need for a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria before being able to apply for gender recognition. The current need to be

assessed and diagnosed by clinicians is seen as an intrusive requirement by the trans community; and

- Proposing options for reducing the length and intrusiveness of the gender recognition system.

It will aim to relieve the bureaucratic and medical burdens for those who choose to change their gender.

Suzanna Hopwood, a member of the Stonewall Trans Advisory Group, said:

I am really pleased that the Government is making good on its commitment to review the Gender Recognition Act. Reform is one of the key priorities in our vision for removing the huge inequalities that trans people face in the UK. The current system is demeaning and broken.

It's vital that this reform removes the requirements for medical evidence and an intrusive interview panel, and finally allows all trans people to have their gender legally recognised through a simple administrative process. That's what we'll be calling for during this consultation, and I'm looking forward to seeing the law change soon after.

The [LGBT survey](#), launched today, will allow the Government to understand the experiences of LGBT individuals across the UK. This will help identify ways to improve public services for LGBT users, including in health and education, and to understand how individuals might face discrimination. The survey will run for 12 weeks until 15 October

Ruth Hunt, Chief Executive of Stonewall said:

We're pleased the Government recognises there is still more to be done to ensure all lesbian, gay, bi and trans people are accepted without exception, and welcome the announcement of new measures to tackle some of the remaining inequalities. The consultation on reforming the Gender Recognition Act is hugely encouraging.

The 2004 Act was ground-breaking in giving trans people a way to have their gender legally recognised, but the process is in dire need of reform. We need a simple process which isn't medicalised, intrusive or demeaning. We would urge the Government to ensure that all trans communities are consulted and to act quickly on their concerns.

Change to the blood donation rules are also welcome. However, while this is an important move, it's vital that this is a stepping stone to a system that doesn't automatically exclude most gay and bi men. We would like to see individualised risk assessment, and are encouraged that the Government and NHS Blood and Transplant Service are committed to exploring how to do this. And we welcome the

Government's intention to better understand the inequalities LGBT people face in Britain to identify key areas for future action, and to ensure that this Government maintains the UK's impressive record as a world leader on LGBT equality.

Ethan Spibey, Founder, FreedomToDonate said:

Today's announcement from the Government marks a world-leading blood donation policy for gay and bisexual men and the other groups previously restricted. I'm so proud that the work of FreedomToDonate and our supporters will help ensure more people than ever before are allowed to safely donate blood.

I began this campaign because I wanted to repay the donor who saved my granddad's life after a major operation and this announcement means I'm closer than ever to doing that, with the invaluable help of our team of volunteers, and the charities and organisations FreedomToDonate represents.

The Government has also accepted the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBT0) to change the deferral periods for blood donation for men who have sex with men. The usual deferral blood donation period will be reduced from 12 months to three months for men who have sex with men. These reductions are based on the most up to date scientific evidence and medical advances, which will offer more people the opportunity to donate blood without affecting the safety of the blood supply – helping to increase the supply of donor blood and save lives. Further work on more personalised risk assessment is also under way to allow as wide a pool of donors as possible while maintaining the safety of the blood supply.

The UK has one of the safest blood supplies in the world. These rules are in place to keep blood donors and the patients who receive their blood safe. The UK Government will now work with NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) to implement the changes to deferrals for sexual behaviours from early 2018, and submit evidence on the other recommendations on blood donation announced today to a wider European evidence evaluation.