

Response to Gender Recognition Act (2004) consultation

Today, I am announcing the Government's response to the consultation on the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

As a Government, we are determined that everyone in the UK should be free to live their lives and fulfil their potential regardless of their sex, gender identity, race or disability.

We are proud to have introduced same-sex marriage and passed the Turing law.

We want transgender people to be free to live and to prosper in a modern Britain. We have looked carefully at the issues raised in the consultation, including potential changes to the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

It is the Government's view that the balance struck in this legislation is correct, in that there are proper checks and balances in the system and also support for people who want to change their legal sex.

However, it is also clear that we need to improve the process and experience that transgender people have when applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate – making it kinder and more straightforward. Our changes will address the main concerns that trans people themselves tell us they have about it.

In 2017 we conducted by far the largest survey ever of British LGBT people, with over 108,000 respondents, of whom 7000 were trans. Of those who had completed their transition, around 2 in 5 said that they had a Gender Recognition Certificate, a higher proportion than is often believed. The survey then asked those who had not applied what had prevented them from doing so. They were able to choose as many reasons as they wanted.

Thirty-eight per cent told us the process was too bureaucratic. So we will place the whole procedure online. Thirty-four per cent said the process was too expensive. This, too, we will address. We will reduce the fee from £140 to a nominal amount.

We have also come to understand that gender recognition reform, though supported in the consultation undertaken by the last government, is not the top priority for transgender people. Perhaps their most important concern is the state of trans healthcare. Trans people tell us that waiting lists at NHS gender clinics are too long. I agree, and I am deeply concerned at the distress it can cause.

That is why we are opening at least three new gender clinics this year, which should see waiting lists cut by around 1,600 patients by 2022. The full benefit of the increases in clinical capacity that we've been able to secure will lead to greater patient choice, shorter waiting times, better geographical coverage and easier access. It will also make it easier to

fulfil the medical requirements of obtaining a GRC.

It is why we last year provided funding for the UK's first National LGBT Health Advisor to help improve transgender people's experience.

Britain leads the world as a country where everybody is able to lead their life freely and treated with respect and that, for many years, transgender people have been widely accepted in British society; able to use facilities of their chosen gender; and able to participate fully in modern life.

At the heart of this is the principle of individual liberty. Our philosophy is that a person's character, your ideas, and your work ethic trumps the colour of your skin or your biological sex. We firmly believe that neither biology nor gender is destiny.

The Equality Act 2010 clearly protects transgender people from discrimination. The same act allows service providers to restrict access to single sex spaces on the basis of biological sex if there is a clear justification.

We want every individual, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity to have the confidence and the freedom to be themselves.

We will continue with our international leadership by hosting our International LGBT Conference to make sure LGBT people around the world are safe to be themselves.

A copy of the analysis report of consultation responses has been placed in the Library of the House and will be published on GOV.UK.