

Glasgow Archdiocesan Primary Head Teacher Association

Questions

1 Do you have any comments on the proposal that applicants must live in their acquired gender for at least 3 months before applying for a GRC?

Yes

If yes, please outline these comments.:

This period of time is too short and would not provide a person with the experiences and challenges experienced in a different gender. This is especially true for younger adults who do not yet have the significant life experience to make a decision which could potentially affect their life and health permanently. As a society we have a responsibility to ensure our most vulnerable citizens are protected, such a short time frame to change gender identity would leave potentially vulnerable citizens at risk and would not allow the authorities to carry out the appropriate assessments to ensure the person understood the implications. This issue is not the same as applying for a passport, a visa or planning permission for a house, this is forever; there needs to be a supported pathway, over a period of time with alternative routes and choices signposted.

Archdiocesan Primary Head Teacher Association believes that sex or gender cannot be reduced to a mere construct of society that is fluid and changeable. At the same time, APHTA is concerned for those who experience gender dysphoria and expects those in authority to ensure appropriate support is available, this does not necessarily mean a change of gender.

2 Do you have any comments on the proposal that applicants must go through a period of reflection for at least 3 months before obtaining a GRC?

Yes

If yes, please outline these comments.:

This time period is too short to ensure that the appropriate checks and balances are in place to assess the capacity of the person wishing the changes. It does not give time to assess the difference between a Sexual Health issue and/or Mental Health conditions which may impact a person's decision making process.

It does not provide enough time should anyone be intent on manipulating the system or manipulating an individual. At no point in the bill is there cognition that a person may change their mind.

3 Should the minimum age at which a person can apply for legal gender recognition be reduced from 18 to 16?

No

If you wish, please give reasons for your view.:

Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as those 18 and under. At the time the convention came into being, we doubt that any thought would have been given to the fact that a child could be identify as Transgender. The UNCRC is there to protect all children, recognising that they do not have the capacity to give informed consent to processes which are irreversible. Manipulating the Convention to allow medical interventions; life changing operations and procedures to be performed on a child is wrong. As Primary Head Teachers we are acutely aware that children are vulnerable to many forces; peer pressure, unconscious bias, the significant influence of media and social media in providing information and misinformation to name but a few. Chapter 4, 4.09 of the bill outlines the things that 16 year olds can take part in; voting, piercings, getting married. All the examples given can be changed. To liken these things to changing gender is to trivialise the wide ranging ramifications the changes will have on individual citizens involved. The impact of puberty blockers, described as reversible by GIDS can affect bone density in later life. GIDS also acknowledges that the long term mental and psychological effects of these puberty blockers are also not known. To subject already potentially vulnerable young people to this is not protecting them. The physical impact of these medicines on bone density could have serious repercussions as the young person gets older. Most young person do not have the capacity to understand what a 'lifetime' means and make choices thinking things will never happen to them. That is why we as adults need to be there to protect them.

Current cases in England highlight the issue around ensuring an under 18 year old has the capacity to make lifelong changes to their identity and gender. GIDS guidelines for the assessment stage include risk assessments describe taking a holistic view of the child/young person's life but appear to rely heavily the child's perception and feelings at a time when. A child may block and bury things they do not understand in terms of trauma or abuse. These may not be dealt with until later in adult life by which time a child could have agreed to make irreversible changes to their body.

We are effectively asking a child to declare life long intent. APHTA consider this is be a huge burden on a child and in terms of the UNCRC Article 3, as adults we would not be doing everything we could to protect the children in our care. Do you have any other comments on the provisions of the draft bill?

There is nothing in the bill which appears to support vulnerable adults. The process outlined should never degrade or demean an individual. However, it should be challenging and thorough to ensure we protect vulnerable citizens and of a length of time that gives the individual a chance to change their mind should they wish too. Expending the process potentially risks causing further distress to those who may be unsure or have not considered fully the implications of changing gender.

4 Do you have any other comments on the provisions of the draft Bill?

No

If yes, please outline these comments.:

5 Do you have any comments on the draft Impact Assessments?

Yes

If yes, please outline these comments.:

Chapter 5, 5.09 the Cabinet Secretary acknowledges that there are men who seek to harm women. Her statement fails to consider that the proposed changes would not provide adequate time for checks to be made to ensure the safety of all women, especially those seeking refuge from abuse. APHTA feel that leaving the decision on admission to women's refuges to an individual operator to 'risk assess' is fraught with danger and again if anything untoward happens it's a vulnerable woman who has been failed, again.

In terms of the Equalities Act it would appear that some protected characteristics are more 'equal' than others. The genuine concern for many people of faith/religious belief is ensuring that all citizens, regardless of gender are treated equally. We welcome debate but often, as would appear from the consultation process, the views of faith groups is side-lined.

As members of APHTA we consider the proposed bill will endanger the rights of children and fail to protect citizens who need our love and support.