

The Scottish Catholic Education Service's National Parent Group

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 is a relatively short period of time and we understand that there is evidence to suggest that most people, and particularly young people, suffering from gender dysphoria do not persist in their condition long term. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders states that 'in natal males, persistence has ranged from 2.2% to 30%. In natal females, persistence has ranged from 12% to 50%.' Additionally, a paper in the British Journal of General Practice admitted that the majority of people presenting with gender dysphoria before puberty will 'desist'. We are concerned that reducing the time that applicants must live in their required gender before applying will lead to an increase in applications from those who have not had a significant enough time to fully understand the implications of this action. Furthermore, it may have a disproportionate impact on those dealing with additional complex issues, or deemed vulnerable in other ways, making irreversible changes within a very short time period.

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.:

Again, this is a relatively short period of time. We would advocate a longer period of reflection before making an irreversible declaration.

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.:

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as those under the age of 18 years. We would question whether every 16 and 17 year old would have sufficient maturity to make such a decision. The teenage years in any case is a testing time in the life of a young person and they experience confusion in many areas of their life. Allowing children and young people to legally change their gender in the midst of such confusion seriously fails the child.

We note that there is to be a public consultation in Scotland regarding the age at which a young adult can be fully accountable for their criminal actions. If, as a country, we have guidelines that state that due to imbalances in the brain development, under 25's participate in risk taking and emotionally driven behaviour, and this immaturity should be taken into account when considering criminal behaviour – surely this evidence of immaturity and developmental maturity should be taken into account when legislating for irreversible decisions of any kind.

Additionally, while this consultation refers to gender recognition certificates, the implications for medical interventions has also to be considered. It is reasonable to suggest that a proportion of people who have lived in an acquired gender, and sought gender recognition, will also seek medical intervention. It is therefore probable that a change in law will not only allow those under 18 years of age to legally change their gender, but also make available, what we consider to be, a dangerous path towards irreversible and experimental medical and surgical interventions. As parents we are particularly concerned about the use of puberty blockers; still an experimental treatment not certified as effective or safe as a treatment for gender dysphoria. It is known that suppressing puberty for three years has a detrimental effect on bone strength. The effect of puberty suppression on brain development is, as yet, unknown.

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

Yes

If yes, please outline these comments.:

As parents who have chosen a Catholic school for their children we fully support the position expressed by the parliamentary office of the Catholic Church that, for the sake of the Common Good of society, gender cannot be reduced to a mere construct that is fluid and changeable. Common Good requires that we are unwavering in love and acceptance of those who experience gender dysphoria and ask that the government provides appropriate support to those who need it. We are concerned that in de-medicalising the wish to legally transition, society may fail to provide the necessary support for those affected by gender dysphoria in the form of contact with health professionals.

The rights of conscience and freedom of religion must be protected for those who do not subscribe to the idea that gender is fluid. This is particularly important for those who work in education, for healthcare workers, marriage celebrants, religious representatives and parents who retain the right to bring up their children according to their conscience and beliefs.

We welcome the additional commitment of the government to the protection of women as well as achieving equality and challenging discrimination. However, we remain concerned about the possibility of a natal male making an application for legal gender recognition expressly for the purpose of gaining access to female-only spaces. The proposal that the act will make this a criminal offence will be unlikely to dissuade someone who already has criminal intentions to harm

women and girls. By way of example, currently 7% of women in custody in Scottish prisons are trans-women who did not identify as female until after conviction.

(This compares to an estimated 0.02% in the general population.) The dangers this poses to women are highlighted by the case of ██████████, a biological male and convicted rapist who, following his incarceration, self-identified as female and applied to be moved to a women's prison. ██████████ application was successful and he went on to sexually assault female inmates at the prison. As an organisation representing parents of school-age children we have concerns for the safety and wellbeing of female schoolchildren should natal males be allowed to occupy female-only changing facilities and toilets.

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

No

If yes, please outline these comments.: