

Self-Declaration and Gender Diverse People

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In July 2018 I published an article On “*Transgender People and Women’s Concerns*”.³ This article and other references can be downloaded by clicking on the internet link in the footnote, or by copying the web address into your internet browser. The article discussed the proposals now put forward by Justine Greening MP who was, until recently, the Minister for the UK Parliament Women and Equalities Committee. This would allow applicants who wished to obtain the legal recognition of their gender status on their birth-certificate to do so by a simple process. Under these proposals they would no longer have to satisfy an independent medical panel and conform to the present requirements laid down by the 2004 Gender Recognition Act. They would instead be able to self-declare without the need for a medical diagnosis of “gender dysphoria” (broadly gender incongruence, or discomfort with their birth assigned gender) being made.

In a response to my article one person correctly noted that I identify two concerns that feminists have: one, that men disguised as women may enter women’s spaces for purposes of sexual attack and two, that women fear men will use it to exert power over women. In my article I contended that these are the result of misunderstandings. My respondent replied by saying that: “*When women get accused of misunderstanding it usually means that they understand all too well!*” Unfortunately what my respondent states about my misunderstanding, is her misunderstanding of what I meant: I was instead referring to the differing views on how gender identity develops. I totally accept that this was a genuine mistake by my respondent, and also on my part for not making it more clear, but what she said also betrayed her own feelings. Her perceptions are common to many people and they also demand a response. This article includes her comments as part of a generalised response.

In this account the word “Transgender” or “Trans” is used as an umbrella term to describe everyone whose gender identity shows some degree of incongruence with their biological sex. The word “Transsexual” is used to describe those people whose sense of rejection of the gender expected by their biological sex is complete, regardless of whether surgical gender reassignment being sought.

1:0: Transgender Identities and Sexual Abuse

People cross dress and manipulate gender for many reasons. Two completely different views about how atypical gender identities are created are currently held. For many lesbians and feminists male to female transsexuals are predatory men who seek to exert power and domination over women, who manipulate femininity to their own desires and advantage by adopting a female role. For transsexuals, (as a generalisation), their understanding of history instead is one of a lifetime being forced to live in a gender role which one cannot identify with, with all of the anguish distress, rejection and high suicide rates that are involved. The former viewpoint disregards the neurophysiological processes which dominate early development, the latter includes them. There is

¹ Personal biography at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SusanBiographyPapers.pdf>

² Available online at Gilchrist, S. (2018): “*Self-Declaration and Gender Diverse People*”: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/243P-SelfDeclarationSubmission.pdf>

³ Gilchrist, S. (2018): “*Transgender People and Women’s Concerns*”. This article can be accessed at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/243P-TransgenderSocialIssues.pdf> .

also a fundamental difference and contradiction between these two explanations since the first is driven by rewards that may be offered, while the second is the search for identity instead.

It is generally considered that the early formation of gender and sexual identities are not well understood. That is why an extended study of these early processes is essential. The current scientific consensus, which is supported by all of the major professional medical institutions who are involved in this area, the experiential evidence and also by my own research⁴, (which you can see at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm>) consider the core elements of both gender and sexual identities to be features which arise very early in development, which do not respond to the predations of others and cannot be changed in later life. They are shown to form before behavioural separation occurs. This early development means that behaviour is not the focus, nor is it the adoption of any gender stereotyped roles. For the same reason it is demonstrated that these gender and sexually variant conditions are driven by the search for identity and not behavioural reward. Therefore there must be as wide a range of moral attitudes and behaviour among the gender and sexually variant peoples as in the community at large. As a consequence a moral duality must exist whereby those transgender people who seek to express their own identities in ways which conform to the highest moral values of society should be highly regarded, while those who do not should be very severely condemned for their acts.

That is not reflected in the statements my respondent makes. She says that: *“The problem the transgendered world has is that it thinks it is right (and justified) to be transgendered and therefore whatever they do must be right”*. Consequently, she says, *“No-one is entitled to a contrary opinion or any reservations”*. She also states that; *“All women know that most men given half a chance will try to take control, to be in charge and tell women what to do”*. She additionally states that I make no mention of men’s violence to women in what I have written. She is concerned that self-declaration will mean that, as of right: *“a lot of unreconstructed men posing as women will invade women’s space and try to take over, creating a great deal of unhappiness”*, also saying that: *“Fears that men will use light regulation to invade women’s spaces to inflict violence on former or current partners, girlfriends etc. are not unreasonable”*, and she warns of the risk of sexual attack. She further states that women want spaces free of men, and she cites an example of a class where several women are there simply because it is a place where there are no men and they can enjoy the company of other women without men. She states that: *“The prospect of men with full male genitalia having access to women’s spaces is abhorrent to most women”*, also *“What concerns feminists and indeed other women is that they do not want a load of unreconstructed men with full male genitalia having the legal status of women and with access to their rights and space”*. In this analysis I totally condemn all forms of gender and sexual abuse. All gender and sexually diverse people ignore these very real and strongly felt concerns at their peril. In all of my work I emphasise the need to apply the moral code in which those who seek to achieve the highest moral standards of society should be highly regarded, while those who seek to take advantage of the situation by engaging in any form of abuse or immoral behaviour, including sexual abuse should be very severely condemned for their acts. However awareness of that moral duality is easily lost in the febrile attitudes of today’s society that is inundated with instances and allegations of sexual abuse, which is compounded by the sexual scandals in the Christian Church.

It was not in disregard of these concerns it was precisely BECAUSE of them, I strongly advocated in my earlier article that absolute responsibility must be exercised. For my respondent to accuse me of not considering these issues is incorrect. This is also why, again in that earlier article, I gave very strong support to the paper by Debbie Hayton which emphasises the same absolute need to take full account of women’s fears and concerns. Debbie’s article can be accessed at: Hayton, Debbie.

⁴ Which you can see at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm> A full personal bibliography is available at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/bibliography.htm>

(2018): *"A Plea to Trans Activists: We Can Protect Trans Rights without Denying Biology"*⁵. However, just as I strongly support Debbie about voicing the concerns of many women I equally strongly disagree with her when she dismisses transgender identities as merely a collection of feelings. In addition I take further issue with Debbie in her article: *"Women are Right to have Concerns Over Trans Reforms"* on September 16, 2018⁶ when she says: *"Transgender people like me change our legal sex and hence our access to facilities - everything from high street store changing rooms to prison cells. What works for one works for all: trans women, fetishists and even abusive men seeking access to women. It is a safeguarding nightmare"*. At the heart of our disagreements are our different views on how gender identity is formed.

I express strong criticism of Debbie Hayton and some radical feminist groups in this account. However I do strongly support Debbie when she emphasises the absolute need for responsibility and total respect for women's concerns.... although I do not agree with some of the suggestions she gives. I know Debbie, I regard her as a friend, and I totally respect the integrity with which she holds her views. Also I have no intention of making a personal attack on her, and we each agree to differ in expressing our beliefs. I have also been pilloried by some of the more strongly minded in the transgender community for giving Debbie that support. However Debbie publically expresses her ideas in the newspapers and other publications, in her campaigning: both individually and as a trade union representative and on social media. Although we disagree strongly in certain matters, I do believe that because of her public role, I also have a duty to make a public response.

With the other person who responded to my previous article I take a different approach. I have used the comments she made to create a generalised view. You, the reader, do not know those which are her comments and those which I have added. Nor should you seek to know, since my purpose is to create a comprehensive argument to which I can give a full response.

If the situation were to be as Debbie describes it, she would be quite correct. However her argument that her statement, which I have quoted above, represents the present reality, is in my view is incorrect. In it she dismisses the protections against abuse that already exist in present legislation. She also fails to note that under the 2010 Equalities Act, self-declaration of gender identity has been in effect, without total disaster since that time. Many of the consequences of the 2004 Gender Recognition act have been superseded by the regulations contained in section 7 of the 2010 Equality Act. This Equality act has been in force for the last eight years and its provisions apply to today's society. In my understanding, the safeguarding and protections that are given by these legislative processes are dismissed or ignored in the arguments Debbie presents.

If any arguments are to be legitimate they must be built on realities which are founded on an objective view which includes the understanding of others and not just statements by the protagonists themselves. It is these current social and legal provisions which must be examined to see what justifications still exist for the arguments that Debbie and the present day protesting groups continue to present. If we do not vigorously support our own positions and the legitimacy of our own identities, regardless of whether any of us undergoes surgical reassignment, the advances we have gained will be lost, and that is why in this account I seek to look in detail at the protections which are provided at the present time.

My anonymous respondent is totally correct to condemn the abuses she encounters, and she is also right to do so with the strength and severity she applies. She also describes how she had to exclude some gender diverse people who did not conform to acceptable standards from her group. I too was once a member of a comparable group of transgender people. I took exactly the same approach

⁵ Hayton, Debbie. (2018): *"A Plea to Trans Activists: We Can Protect Trans Rights without Denying Biology"* <http://quillette.com/2018/03/30/plea-trans-activists-can-protect-trans-rights-without-denying-biology/>.

⁶ Hayton, Debbie. (2018) *"Women are Right to have Concerns Over Trans Reforms"* on September 16, 2018, <https://debbiehayton.wordpress.com/>

when I encountered similar misuse, being called a killjoy for my efforts. However, to adopt the viewpoint she expresses, also that which is adopted in a letter discussed later in this article is not the correct approach. Both of these identify only those people who have undergone the surgery of gender reassignment as genuine transsexuals, and describe all others as potential purveyors of abuse. Today about four-fifths of transgender people are presenting in non-binary roles. In all societies the need for self-declaration must be to enable all people to find their own gender identities: not to force them into the sort of binary stereotypes that society and psychiatrists have in the past, and some too often still demand. Allowing people to truly explore their own feelings also enables them to create the self-esteem and self-worth which permits them to develop the security of identity that is needed to manage the conflicts they face. Self-diagnosis and self-declaration must therefore be set the context of the present time. They do not determine the management and treatment methods that may be applied. In this account I also argue that self-diagnosis and self-declaration are both needed for gender diverse people to fulfil their lives in ways that they need, and the law requires.

Any presumption that implementing a process of self-declaration will affect only transgender people is incorrect since many other issues are involved. The legal self-declaration of gender identity demands change to societies where one gender group seeks to condemn or exert power over the other for either feminist or chauvinist causes. That has led to toxic arguments with radical feminist groups where genuine transgender concerns may be ignored, compromised or dismissed. Because of these disputes, transgender people may become scapegoats and pawns in the battles over these other issues, including power, discrimination and sex.

2:0: The 2004 Gender Recognition Act

When the Gender Recognition Act was passed in 2004, it was thought to be a state-of-the-art piece of legislation. The Act allowed transgender people to change their legal gender marker and be recognised in law as belonging to their new gender. When anyone satisfies its provisions a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) is issued. The requirements to obtain a GRC are as follows: That the person is over 18 years of age; that they can demonstrate they have lived in their new gender role for at least 2 years. Two medical reports, one from a gender specialist, are also required. Proof of intention to continue to live in new gender role must also be furnished. If that person is married, then permission from the partner must be obtained. A fee must also be paid. Divorce from a partner in any existing marriage was previously required. In January 2016, following consultation with transgender individuals and support groups, the Women & Equalities Committee of the United Kingdom Parliament, chaired by Maria Miller MP reported to the government with a number of proposed changes to improve the gender recognition process, along with 34 other recommendations to improve the lives of transgender people.

Since its introduction in 2004 only 4910 people have obtained a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC)⁷. Particular issues with the process that were highlighted were that only binary options available. Non-binary gender identities are not recognised by the Act. (These are people with identities not exclusively male or female, or who accept no gender at all). Other people who are excluded from the provisions of the act are transgender people who struggle to maintain all the love, relationships and commitments they have created in their birth assigned role, even when they feel equally as strongly as others about their own need to transition, The act makes no provision for anyone before the decision to transition is made. The absence of these provisions, and the social implications which are created by the need to live in the binary gender role for two years, may force people into transition and into the adoption of that binary role. The stresses, rejections and trauma encountered at this time can be extremely high. Two years living in new gender role is also

⁷ According to Government information given in the consultation process documentation concerning reform of the 2004 Gender Recognition Act: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reform-of-the-gender-recognition-act-2004>

considered too long. The process is costly and it is over medicalised. The system is bureaucratic and often has an effect on an applicant's health. Applicants never meet the intrusive reviewing panel. The 'Spousal Veto' is considered too draconian. (This is where a wife/husband can delay the process by objecting to it). Clearly reform was needed and as has been previously noted, the proposals now put forward by Justine Greening MP who was, until recently, the Minister for Women and Equalities Committee would allow applicants who wished to obtain the legal recognition of their gender status on their birth-certificate to do so by a simple process which would permit them to self-declare their gender identities without a 'diagnosis' of gender dysphoria first being made. The protections against abuse and the invasion of women's spaces would remain the same as those provided in the 2010 Equality act.

This binary approach arises at least in part because the primary purpose of the 2004 Gender Recognition Act was to legalise marriage between two people, one of whom had undergone the full process of gender reassignment. However for medical and other reasons, surgery was not an absolute requirement. In those days when marriage could only be between those who were legally defined as a man to a woman, (and also as now, intended for life), the enforcement of binary definitions was of major importance. The legalisation of Same-Sex marriage in the United Kingdom has since made this unnecessary. The Church of England has followed this legal definition: so marriages where one person has transitioned are fully recognised by this Church, with all the same rights and privileges as any other married couple, including being married by a Church of England priest in a full wedding ceremony, and take the same vows, in a Church of England Parish Church. Preventing sexual abuse and discrimination against women was not the driving force behind the 2004 Gender Recognition act. The introduction of Equal Marriage has made its current provisions anachronistic, and it ought to be reformed. However any reform should also be accompanied with the removal of the exemptions given to religious organisation in the Equality Act 2010. Otherwise in the eyes of those religious organisations which still seek to censure and condemn transgender people, the protections currently contained in the Gender Recognition Act 2004, will be lost.

The belief that transgender people are men who want to become women and vice-versa is commonly held. However the driving force behind this belief is the need for transgender people to be themselves. The demand for gender reassignment can become an obsession but once it is achieved, for many, gender no longer becomes an issue, and these people often merge invisibly into society, living ordinary, everyday and unremarkable lives. For these people the 2004 Gender Recognition act has been of great benefit, allowing people to enter into what are regarded by society and the Church of England as heterosexual marriages, which are in accord with their now recognised gender identity. It has also enabled these people to integrate fully into society without anyone being aware of the transgender history in their lives. The proposals that are now put forward for reform of the 2004 Gender Recognition act has promoted a furious reaction by some groups. This is on the grounds that it would open the floodgates to sexual abuse. However that was not the purpose of the act, and is shown to be incorrect in this analysis. The most significant effect of the 2004 Gender Recognition Act; which remains valid today, is to set the marker for marriage and social interaction to be that of gender identity, instead of biological sex.

Although many of the regulations in the 2004 Gender Recognition Act have been superseded, or are now outdated, significantly under this act, people are not free to choose their legal gender. They are required apply for it in an independent process which involves the judgements of specialists and an anonymous panel. This gives it the authority of being validated by the state.

3:0: Self-Declaration of Gender Identity in the 2010 Equality Act

These demands to conform to the gender binary which are imposed in the Gender Recognition Act 2004 through the decrees of an anonymous panel are in direct contrast to the Equality Act 2010, where the protected characteristic of "gender reassignment" is self-identified. Section 7 of the Act,

which refers to this “protected characteristic” of “gender reassignment” states: “A person has this characteristic if he or she is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person’s sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. Discrimination against people covered by Section 7 is unlawful if a person is perceived to have the protected characteristic (regardless of whether that perception is correct). The Explanatory Notes for the Act make clear that the “process” referred to in Section 7 need not include medical treatment. The following example is given: “A person who was born physically female decides to spend the rest of her life as a man. He starts and continues to live as a man. He decides not to seek medical advice as he successfully ‘passes’ as a man without the need for any medical intervention. He would have the protected characteristic of gender reassignment for the purposes of the Act” (see Equality Act 2010: Explanatory Notes, August 2010, para 43). The 2010 Equality Act has provided many great advances for transgender people but for the last 8 years the principle of self-declaration enshrined in it has allowed other people who disrupt the gendered order of society for any reason to claim a transgender identity without incurring social and legal consequences for doing so, and to obtain protection against discrimination under the act.

4:0: Interpretation

Some argue that the implementation of legal self-declaration means that all medical safeguards should be ignored. Under the present proposals it is only the birth certificate that can be changed and the medical profession would be totally abrogating its responsibility if it permitted or supported any treatments that it for did not consider correct. That essential safeguarding is true of medical practice in all areas. The idea that self-declaration allows any person to bypass all of these medical protections has been peddled by many groups. In my view nobody, including transgender people should ever be permitted to specify the course of treatment or be prescribed drugs, unless the medical expertise agrees that the course is correct. That viewpoint is corroborated in a review of procedures offered by Gender Identity Clinics in the United Kingdom which has just been issued⁸. In this review it is concluded that a medical diagnosis of “Gender Dysphoria” must still be made before any services that involve gender reassignment are offered.

Nevertheless the ability to self-declare changes the approach. Instead of enforcing a medical assessment which creates a barrier to overcome, self-declaration allows all sides to work together so that correct decisions are made. These advances are very much needed; however they may also make it harder to get treatment. Self-declaration may result in treatment being more likely to be refused on the National Health Service once the authority of an independent panel is no longer required. This may be on the grounds of limited resources and the perception that it should be treated more like cosmetic surgery. Instead of a remote panel making decisions which are based on how well the recipient adjusts and conforms to the values of a gender divided society, self-declaration also demands that medial judgements must be made on the basis of the integrity of the individual, personal adjustment and on considerations of sexual abuse. Any medical practitioner who provides treatment or prescribes drugs for anyone who is later found to use what he or she has enabled, to engage in sexual abuse or other inappropriate behaviour may be in great trouble with his or her professional bodies. Therefore more caution instead of less caution may be exercised, and it would be possible for any person could be struck off if due diligence was not observed. The concept of self-declaration has created a political minefield. Different agendas are involved and this must include relationships between power, money and sex.

The same is true for access to women’s “Protected spaces”. The Equality act is quite certain in its declaration that access to these “Protected Spaces” must be dealt with on a case by case basis, which must be objectively justified, and also a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. The Government has also made it clear that it has no intention of changing the provisions of the

⁸ The consultation can be found at: <https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/survey/gender-identity-services-for-adults/>.

Equality Act, Therefore anyone who was deluded enough to go through the process of self-declaration for these purposes would be trapped by the law in the same way as if they had not. Self-declaration is often interpreted to mean that simply by making a statutory declaration of change of gender, men must be treated completely as women (and vice versa). However under the Equality Act this would not seem to be correct. Instead it means that a man who makes such a declaration becomes a transgender woman and should be treated in that way. Likewise a woman who makes such a declaration must be treated as a transgender man. Therefore the protections under the Equality Act 2010 remain intact⁹. These restrictions and medical caveats are disregarded by many feminist groups who argue that a free-for-all situation exists, so that any man who self declares a change of legal gender is able to invade women's protected spaces at will in order to do what she likes. The legal freedom which is envisaged does not prevent, remove or contradict any decisions that are made on medical or social grounds and no changes to these protections are proposed.

Although the present consultation being undertaken by the United Kingdom government does not specify it, it would be expected that the applicants would continue to make a Statutory Declaration as with the current process. That is required for any change of name, and it is the name that is chosen which reflects the gender affiliation that is made. This declaration has exactly the same legal weight as giving evidence in court with the same criminal consequences. Section 22 of the Equality Act 2010 also legislates that it is a criminal offence for any person who has acquired information about a person's transgender history in an official capacity, to disclose the information to any other person. The exceptions indeed are narrowly drawn, so it should generally be assumed that the law about non-disclosure will apply to an employer, manager or colleague; or for anyone working in any capacity for an official body or is a service provider. It should nevertheless be noted that Section 22 sets out a series of exceptions, where disclosure is lawful. This may be where the disclosure is required in accordance with an order of court or tribunal, including the purposes of instituting, preventing or investigating crime. In a number of cases where advantage is taken of transgender legislation for sexual abuse the gender history will be a relevant. That may also be where a complainer subsequently learns of the birth gender of a transgender person they have had sexual contact with and alleges that had they been aware of this they would not have consented to the sexual contact. How gender identity is officially recognised is also important. As has been noted earlier, the 2004 Gender Recognition Act requires a number of preconditions, which demand living in the acquired gender role for two years, and independent judgement by an official panel. That is in direct contrast to the Equality Act 2010 where the protected characteristic of "Gender Reassignment" is self-identified. Thus the proposed reform of the Gender Recognition act 2004 to include self-declaration would only bring it into line with the provisions for self-identification which have been active since 2010 through the Equality Act.

The question that really must be asked is about whether anyone who was intent on manipulating their gender for the purposes of sexual abuse would put themselves through this process. In common with all legal processes associated with any statutory declaration, applicants have to supply a form of primary ID such as a passport or driving licence plus proof of residency, such as 2bank statement or utility bill. Would they wish to permanently change their gender with the result that their employers would get a notification from the Taxation and Regulatory authorities? Some might be sufficiently deluded to try to do this. People who are intent on pursuing such abuses will often go to extreme lengths to pursue and justify their goals. However they may find the process more difficult if they seek medical intervention to make their appearance more convincing. I have shown that this is because the consequence of self-declaration will turn the medical judgements that are needed away from assessing the need to conform to a specified gender identity, to one where a judgement on integrity, peace and purpose become the focus instead.

⁹ <https://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Making-the-case-for-women-only-July-2011.pdf> page 5.

Indeed such extreme steps do not have to be taken for anyone who is intent on abuse. For many years people have been able to change their names, passports, driving licences and other legal documents so that they are able to live without challenge in the acquired gender role. The consequence of the Gender Recognition Act means that self-declaration of gender identity has been in place for the last eight years. One professional who deals with safeguarding issues and is a member of police independent advice groups, and a member of scrutiny panels dealing with violence against women and girls, has not heard of a single instance of safeguarding arising from misuse of the Equality Act 2010. Nor have senior police officers and Crown Prosecution Service officers who have been asked. That has also been confirmed in other policing information I have been given¹⁰. In other countries where legislation for self-declaration has already been enacted there has not been any upwelling of sexual abuse. This is a nightmare which comes from imaginings not reality, and other reasons for it have to be explored.

6:0 Awareness, Policing and Responsibility

For the last eight years anyone engaged in gender challenging behaviour can claim protected status by claiming to be transgender, irrespective of the purpose or disruptive nature of their acts. There is a tendency for any group who is universally attacked to bond together in common defence. However that results in boundaries being enforced where all gender and sexually variant people are condemned without exception for engaging in immoral or abusive behaviour, without regard to the motives of their acts. That universal condemnation has occurred in Christian theology; and a significant and continuing element in my research is to establish why these theological changes have taken place¹¹. In my previous article I have required that women's fears must be fully recognised and it is also why I emphasise that absolute responsibility must be maintained¹². However full responsibility can never be exercised unless all views and motives are fully and properly considered, including those of all opposing sides when disputes of any kind arise.

It is very important for transgender people to be fully represented in public events like Pride Marches. However the general lack of understanding and the misattributions that are made in the public media can have a destructive effect. My respondent correctly states that: *"As things stand most women and most feminists accept transsexuals fairly readily"*. Elsewhere she also states that: *"I rather suspect most women have little or no problem with genuine transsexuals. They really are not the issue. The problem is that transgender covers a huge range of people, some of whom are not very pleasant and women have cause to be wary"*. In the article: *"Self-identification will not help transgender people"*, which was first published by the Times on 5 July 2018¹³, Debbie Hayton states: *"Such a massive change in our relationship with society has required evidence of need: a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and medical reports. Self-identification sweeps away those safeguards. Any male person could declare they are female and inherit the rights and protections afforded to women. It's no wonder that women have become alarmed and have been meeting even amid intimidation and threats. They have not been reassured by platitudes. Men wouldn't claim to be women purely to violate women's rights, would they? Actually some might, and the ones that would are those who women are worried about"*. The real problem with these statements is that it is not the need to deal fully with and respond to women's concerns. That is fully accepted. It is the misrepresentation contained in these statements and the actions of other groups which ignore the changes which have taken place during the last eight years, which dismiss as platitudes, statements

¹⁰ This is not to say that abuse does not occur. That may include impersonation of the opposite gender. Abuse by anybody is detected by the nature of their behaviour and legislation is not the answer. The distinction must be made between those who are engaged in the pursuit of identity and that those who seek the rewards of inappropriate or abusive sex.

¹¹ See for example. Gilchrist, S. (2017): *"A House Built on Sand? Attitudes to Gender and Sexual Variant Identities and Behaviour in Christianity and the Christian Church"*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/231P-HouseUponSand.pdf> A full personal bibliography is given in <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/bibliography.htm>

¹² Gilchrist, S. (2018): *"Transgender People and Women's Concerns"*. This article can be accessed at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/243P-TransgenderSocialIssues.pdf>

¹³ Hayton, Debbie (2018): *"Self-identification will not help transgender people"*: The Times on 5 July 2018, <https://debbiehayton.wordpress.com/>

that are contrary to their own views, and present as facts, particular viewpoints which ignore the provisions against sexual and gender abuse that are written into the 2010 Equality Act.

Genuine disputes and concerns over disagreement can turn into toxic arguments when neither side believes the truths the other states. In the previous sections of this document I show that the protections against gender and sexual abuse which are incorporated into the Equality Act and the equivalent medical and ethical protections, which also exist, have been dismissed or ignored. When these provisions already exist, the proposal to reform the 2004 Gender Recognition act to allow self-declaration through changing the birth certificate will only have a limited behavioural effect. However that implementation of self-declaration should also be accompanied with the removal of the religious exemptions in the Equality Act. Detecting abuse depends on behaviour rather than gender: and people are able to make their own judgements on when abusive behaviour is being pursued. If the argument that male to female transsexuals are men who exclusively seek sensual rewards, or strive to exert power over women was correct, then eight years of self-declaration should have thrown up evidence of gross abuse: it has not.

People cross-dress and disrupt gender for many reasons. Some will be those who seek power, domination and other rewards. Earlier in this document I show that, for transgender people, the search is for identity instead. Of course there can be overlaps where both sets of motives are involved. The experiential evidence, the current scientific consensus, which is supported by all of the major professional medical institutions who are involved in this area, and also my own research, all regard the core elements of both gender and sexual identities as features which arise very early in development, which do not respond to the predations of others and cannot be changed in later life. I show that a moral duality must also exist whereby those who seek to live to the highest standards of society should be greatly regarded, while those who do not should be severely condemned for their acts. Not only must this moral duality be fully expressed inside the transgender community, it must also be seen to be expressed inside that community by those who are outside it. The management methods and behaviours encountered in identity driven and reward driven interactions are almost opposite in character to one and other, and this means that their differences should also be easily observed.

That these public judgements are already being made is evident in the statement by my respondent, where she says: *“I rather suspect most women have little or no problem with genuine transsexuals. They really are not the issue. The problem is that transgender covers a huge range of people, some of whom are not very pleasant and women have cause to be wary”*. That potential for abuse must be properly addressed, but legislation or demands for surgery do not resolve these concerns. When people meet others who are transgender, they instead find people who are seeking to be true to their own identities in the gender they know they possess. For many, that may not conform to a binary mode. The increasing public profile of gender diverse people means that others are becoming increasingly able to make their own judgements. It is of note that a recent poll showed that a large majority of women were in favour of granting transgender women full women’s rights. It is also reassuring to note the strength of the condemnation by other LGBT people of anti-transgender lesbian activists who sought to disrupt the 2018 London Pride parade. These developments are welcome but more should be done. What is needed is not legislation that drives transgender people into narrowly defined binary roles. What is instead needed is a strong educational programme which acknowledges the integrity of the full range of transgender identities and deals with the abuse and discrimination which transgender people are subjected to through the ignorance and the social, religious and political agendas that continue to exist.

When Debbie Hayton and others condemn the current proposals to replace the legal barriers to the self-declaration of gender identity with words such as: *“Self-declaration of legal gender is a reckless proposal that would deny trans people the opportunity to have their gender externally verified and force them to rely entirely on their own assertions. While that might work in some parts of society, it*

could be catastrophic for those living in hostile environments where their motives may be questioned and their claims disbelieved. (Hayton, Debbie" October 14th 2017 in "The Gender Recognition Act needs reform but self-identification is not the answer"¹⁴) They are correct in raising real issues that must be addressed over social interactions with society. However that is not their argument. The argument they present against self-declaration is that it would release a torrent of sexually based abuse and an irresponsible invasion of women's spaces. This is shown to fail for three main reasons: the competence of the medical profession, the regulations against abuse that are built into the 2010 Equality act, and the consequences of the ability to self-declare gender identity with protection from discrimination and without legal consequences, which has been available for the last eight years. There should be no place in any campaigning where the issues which are being presented as current issues, are instead issues where the outcomes are already known. Such an action only serves to raise alarm and concern. The word "reckless" is used in this paper. However the real question to ask is "Which is the reckless act". The failure to take account of the present situation suggests that transgender people may be being used as sacrifices and pawns for other arguments. Issues of gender and sexual abuse must always be of very real concern. However the same need to create a scenario which departs from present reality redirects the discussion away from issues of sexual abuse and the invasion of women's protected spaces towards the other social issues that must be addressed.

7:0: Transgender Identities, Christian and Feminist Concerns

The present furore over self-declaration would seem to be an attempt to corral a horse long after it has bolted. The Equality Act of 2010 has been drafted to deal with issues of sexual abuse. Its provisions have been reviewed in detail in the earlier sections of this account. Just as my respondent could legitimately exclude those gender diverse people who did not conform to acceptable standards, and I could apply the same exclusions to my own group, the provision of women's "Protected Spaces" (and men's) under this Act remains intact. Therefore different reasons may apply. Other ethics of society must be examined, for self-declaration can only obtain its intended purpose in societies where true gender equality is sought, and gender based abuses of power and discrimination do not exist. A further concern is the attitude adopted by religious organisations, including sections of the Christian Church. The approach taken to gender and sexually diverse people by many Christian Churches is most conveniently described in Article 2357 of the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church. This states that: *"Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, Tradition has always declared that "Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They choose the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved."* By extension transgender experience may be included. Not only does this statement deny the moral duality inherent to gender and sexually variant behaviour which has been described earlier in this account, it condemns every departure from the expected behaviour and the male and female stereotypes which are demanded by a gender and socially divided society, as depraved and misdirected acts. All such behaviour for any purpose disrupts and challenges the expected order any gender discriminatory society, and the disorder created by the religiously promoted suppression and power over women casts a very dark shadow over many religious traditions, including the Christian Church.

It is notable that many people in the more radical sections of the feminist movement deny the legitimacy of transgender identities. It is argued that this is not for reasons of sexual abuse, but for reasons of discrimination and power balances in society. One should expect a true feminist agenda

¹⁴ Hayton, Debbie" October 14th 2017 "The Gender Recognition Act needs reform but self-identification is not the answer": <https://debbiehayton.wordpress.com/>

to seek equality for all, but paradoxically the need to assert and reverse the gender binary between men and women is essential if the momentum of the more radical feminist campaigns for gender recognition is to be sustained. This whole area has become a political minefield where the validity of transgender experience and the freedom of self-identification are being condemned because transgender people are being alleged to erase the validity of lesbian relationships. As far as these feminists are concerned transgender people are perceived to weaken their campaigns against the oppression of women, since the mantra that male to female transsexuals are really men who masquerade as women, has to continually be reinforced.

There is little incentive for anyone adopting these radical viewpoints to seek to understand the depth, nature and realities of transgender identities. Instead of this the concerns over self-declaration are highlighted, abuses are emphasised, the genuine fears of women are manipulated and the medical and legal restrictions are ignored. Of course all of these concerns must be fully and effectively dealt with, but it is even worse when transgender people themselves reinforce the same perceptions. A letter published in the Guardian in May 2018 did exactly that. It states that *“We are transsexual people deeply concerned about the proposed removal of safeguards from the Gender Recognition Act. Replacing the evidenced-based process for obtaining a gender recognition certificate with an over-the-counter style self-declaration blurs the distinction between us and transgender people who remain physically intact. This is problematic when such male-bodied people, including sexual fetishists, demand the rights afforded to women as a protected sex, including access to their private spaces. Transsexual people undergo a meaningful transition, including hormone therapy and surgery. We fear that these proposals will not only put women’s rights at risk but also damage our credibility in society. We are already seeing our right to define as “transsexual” being challenged by transgender activists who seek to remove this distinction. We call on politicians to show courage and facilitate dialogue valuing all affected groups. We absolutely condemn all attempts to suppress this debate”*.

To argue in this Guardian letter that those who have undergone gender reassignment are more genuine than others is I believe an affront to those who have struggled, and those who still struggle to maintain their lives in the roles that they have been assigned to, because of the loyalty to the commitments to others that they have made. Instead of fighting for the greater understanding of all transgender people I believe that the signatories of this letter have put the preservation of their own interests above the interests of everyone else. The implication that people who have not sought gender reassignment can be more closely associated with those who pursue perversion or disruption is just as abhorrent to many people on the gender variant spectrum and in this I include gender motivated cross-dressers and transvestites (in whatever terms they describe themselves) as well. Not only does this letter betray the integrity of such people, it falls into the trap adopted by some in feminist movements who regard the motives of gender variant people to be in pursuit of power and femininity instead. Masculinity never seems to be considered. These are indeed very real issues but a letter which fails to bring to attention the true motives and the deep sense of identity felt by many transgender people, and which also implies that those who have undergone the surgery of gender reassignment are more genuine than others only divides the transgender communities and damages this cause.

In previous generations transgender people could rightly be condemned by feminist groups for reinforcing the binary gender stereotypes they were required to conform to. Do we really want to return to a situation where gender identity clinics withheld or approved treatment which is dependent on how feminine an individual presented in appearance, behaviour and clothes?. For many transgender people the conflict they face is one between their loyalty to the commitments, love and relationships in the life they have built which battles against the drive of identity that is felt deeply inside. Commitments and relationships can be destroyed but the sense of identity cannot. Do we want to pursue an approach which attacks the integrity of the life they have built and destroys any balance they may seek to achieve? Do we want to continue the misconception that transgender

people are men who want to be women (and vice versa), whereas the real need for transgender people to seek gender reassignment comes from the need to be truly themselves.

I also object to statements which suggest that castration goes a long way to show good faith. It further reinforces the implication that people who have not sought gender reassignment can be more closely associated with those who pursue perversion, disruption or abuse, and I feel that many people will be offended by the association this makes. You can see the Guardian letter and my response to it in: Gilchrist, S. (2018): *“Response to the letter “Standing up for Transsexual rights”*¹⁵

In her response to my original article, my respondent very eloquently describes the fears and inequities that many women experience. I do not dissent with these in any way, indeed in my original article I emphasise very strongly that these must be very fully addressed. However that must be done in a calm and dispassionate way, and not in response to the social and political agendas that are pursued. Many transgender people are extremely angry about the attitudes of “Trans Exclusive Radical Feminists” (TERFs) who condemn transgender people as predatory men who seek to exert power and domination over women, without any giving regard to, and indeed refusing to consider the reality of what being transgender means. That anger is greatly compounded by the way in which such radical feminist groups have used the proposals of self-declaration to accentuate what are very genuine fears and concerns of women by ignoring the restrictions that are currently placed on the process, and by arguing that allowing self-declaration will create a deluge of sexual abuse and invasions of women’s private spaces. For transgender people, anger is not a helpful response. It is essential that transgender people fully assert the realities of their identities while ensuring that the real concerns of women are fully and honestly met.

Absolute responsibility and sensitivity must therefore be practiced. For transgender people who have undergone surgical reassignment, for non-binary people and for those who have not undergone surgical reassignment that must be interpreted in different ways. In this document I argue that self-declaration of gender identity is needed for medical reasons. However the social divisions and inequalities of gender in society instead take over the dominant role and the medical need is ignored. I have also shown that a moral duality must exist whereby those gender and sexually variant people who seek to maintain the highest standards of society should be highly regarded, while those who do the reverse should rightly be condemned for their acts. Transgender people are a minority in a society which is awash with such inequalities and sexual abuse, Therefore it is essential that understanding of what transgender people face is not suppressed by the social and political arguments and campaigns which the proposals for self-declaration create.

Transgender people who put forward an argument which requires that surgical gender reassignment should be used as a mark of genuineness betrays all those who do not follow that path. It presumes that a binary identification must be pursued when many more people today are identifying with non-binary roles. In the eyes of other people it diminishes the validity of their experiences. It also divides the transgender community and in addition it is the wrong approach. Like the provisions of the 2004 Gender Recognition Act it forces people into defined binary roles. When some transgender people create through innuendo or otherwise, questions about sexual abuse and apply them to other transgender people, it can have an enormously destructive effect.

Despite all its difficulties, self-declaration is needed to enable people to find the reality and truth of their own gender identities and to discover the self- esteem that this acceptance provides. It opens the door to all people, transgender, transsexual, agender, gender queer, cross-dresser, transvestite, however people define themselves, to find their true selves. More than that the ability to legally define this gender identity is needed for people to be able to assert their true places in society: with all of the security that the law could provide.

¹⁵ Gilchrist, S. (2018): *“Response to the letter “Standing up for Transsexual rights”*: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/243P-ResponseToGuardianLetterMay18.pdf>

However the proposed process of self-declaration which means giving the freedom to change the gender identification on the birth certificate from male to female and vice versa is only part of the answer. An important, if unwelcome feature of the 2004 Gender Recognition Act is that it was not the individual who could decide what gender a person could be assigned to. That is done by an anonymous panel acting on behalf of the state, rather than the person himself or herself. However the advantage in the act for transgender people is that the act changes the marker that is used for legal purposes from biological sex to the gender identity that is actually possessed. That change has been endorsed by the Church of England, who now gives full recognition to transgender people in its marriage ceremonies and in the priesthood. Currently the Church of England is involved in the preparation of an Episcopal teaching document on relationships, marriage and sexuality which applies to the sexually diverse people in its membership. However it has been made clear to those preparing the document that there can be no change to the traditional doctrine of the Church as "*The Church of England*" has received it". A consequence of reforming the 2004 Gender Recognition Act from one of state-declaration to one which is based on self-declaration means that the equivalent protections that it had afforded to transgender people in this area will be lost.

Without the equivalent of a Gender Recognition Act to enforce an equivalent affirmation of legal status for sexually diverse people, that Church embargo on refusing to even consider the possibility of change the traditional teaching "*as the Church of England has received it*" places limitations on the approaches the Church of England is prepared to make. Therefore the issues which have led to the preparation of this teaching document are unlikely to be properly addressed. Those protections can only be regained by removing the exemptions given to religious organisations in the 2010 Equality Act. Changing the birth certificate from male to female and vice-versa also does nothing to help those people who do not identify themselves with an exclusively male or female role. That is not good enough when today about four-fifths of those who identify themselves as transgender do not adopt a binary status. I very strongly argue that the ability to self-declare is needed for the medical, health and welfare of transgender people, but I also argue that this should come in a package where the ability to declare a non-binary gender marker on passports and other legal documents is provided, and when the exemptions given to religious organisations on the 2010 Equality Act are removed.

8:0: Medical Consensus

One major concern mentioned at the start of this article comes from the lack of agreement about how gender identity develops. Two opposing views are encountered, and I also describe these at the start of this document. I state that one viewpoint disregards the neurophysiological processes which dominate early development while the latter includes them. A major focus of my own research is to examine how these early neurophysiological processes contribute to the development of gender identity. A summary of my research is given at. <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/index.htm> , however for these purposes it is important to note that this research fully supports the scientific consensus that the core elements of both gender and sexual identities are features which arise very early in development, which do not respond to the predations of others and which cannot be changed in later life. It additionally supports the latest Memorandum of Understanding issued jointly by all the major medical and psychological professional institutions in the United Kingdom. This condemns both "Gay Cures" and "Reparative Therapy" as being totally inappropriate, and for their harmful and destructive effect. These are processes which attempt to change the sexual orientation and the gender identity of any individual by putting a sexual orientation or gender identity which corresponds with that associated with the biological sex in its place. Not only do these processes fail to achieve this, they attack and destroy the sexual or gender identity on which that person's sense of selfhood is built and they leave a vacuum in its place. Radical feminists and transgender people who dismiss this core sense of gender identity as merely being a collection of feelings, or who alarm people by citing only the difficulties of self-declaration; create the same damage. They also support

the secular scapegoating of transgender people by society and they contribute to the high rates of suicide and attempted suicide, together with the harm and distress which many feel.

9:0: Sexual Abuse

A major concern arises because of the way in which such medical diagnoses are set aside or ignored because of the often justified condemnations of sexual abuse. That fundamental difference is shown in the advice being given by different organisations to people who are completing the consultation presently being carried out on reform of the Gender Recognition Act. Stonewall for example takes the position that the primary marker determining social interaction with society is gender identity¹⁶, while in the advice given by the “*Woman’s Place UK*”¹⁷, which Debbie publically supports is biological sex. It is also ironic that the purpose of recognition process in the Gender Recognition act, which was to establish gender identity as the more relevant marker is now being used to argue for a reversal of the process, with the aim of restoring the primary marker to biological sex. Apart from contradicting modern research, that emphasis also leads to divisions in the transgender and transsexual communities. Very few transgender people consider gender reassignment surgery to be about a change of sex. Instead its purpose is as far as possible to physically conform to the gender identity that has always been possessed. It also means that someone who has undergone surgical gender reassignment can only function in terms of behaviour with others in the way that a woman might expect. That was addressed in comments made by my respondent when she said: *“The prospect of men with full male genitalia having access to women’s spaces is abhorrent to most women. Calling themselves women adds insult to injury. Castration goes a long way to show good faith. And as for unisex loos – the number of women who like that idea is tiny”*. Her overall view of the situation is reflected in three other statements: *“The problem the transgendered world has is that it thinks it is right (and justified) to be transgendered and therefore whatever they do must be right. Consequently no-one is entitled to a contrary opinion or any reservations”* also: *“All women know that most men given half a chance will try to take control, to be in charge and tell women what to do”* and: *“The feminists have an entirely justified fear that a lot of unreconstructed men posing as women will invade their space and try to take over, creating a great deal of unhappiness”*.

In her publications Debbie makes similar complaints about people she calls “*transgender activists*”, when she claims that self-declaration is a “*reckless proposal*” which will lead to all medical and legal safeguards being swept away, thereby creating a cafeteria style approach where people are free to claim the legal gender they wish without regard to the purpose of their acts. If any responsible campaign is to take place it must be grounded on fact. Together with feminist groups she describes the presumed inadequacies of the 2010 Equality act, without giving any reasons for these claims. The disregard for these issues is one reason why I have tried to examine in detail the provisions of the 2004 Gender Recognition Act, and the 2010 Equality act. I demonstrate that under the Equality Act, the provisions for the protection of women’s private spaces remain intact. In my research I reveal why implementing the process of self-declaration may make it harder rather than easier to get consent to medical treatment. I also show that in practice self-declaration has been in existence for the last six years, and that none of the dire predictions that are presently being promoted have come into effect.

Of course sexual abuse is of enormous concern, and of course it must be given the highest priority. However it may be helpful to look at parallel situations. Although gender and sexual identities develop independently of each other, in terms of out interaction with society we are on similar journeys¹⁸. For as long as same-sex acts of sex were criminal activities the traditional teaching of the Christian Church could not be challenged because its criminalisation meant that access to

¹⁶ <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/gender-recognition-act>

¹⁷ <https://womansplaceuk.org/wpuk-guidance-on-gra-consultation/>

¹⁸ I show this in my research

contrary evidence was denied. This teaching condemned all such acts, regardless of purpose condemned as: *“acts of grave depravity that are intrinsically disordered, contrary to the natural law. They choose the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved”*. Since the legalisation of homosexual behaviour the moral duality which is inherent to all of the gender and sexually variant conditions has become evident, so that today those sexually variant people who seek to express their own identities in ways which conform to the highest moral values of society are often highly regarded, while those who do not, can still be very severely condemned for their acts. That familiarity means it is also easy for other people to distinguish between a loving same-sex relationship, and a close heterosexual friendship, even in the absence of sex.

In the case of transgender people the management methods and behaviours encountered in identity driven and reward driven interactions are almost opposite in character to one and other, and this means that the corresponding differences should also be easily observed. That this is already happening is seen in the support that many feminists and women in general are giving to male to female transgender people. The explosion in sexual abuse predicted by those opposed to self-declaration has not happened because of the absence of any legal prohibition, or because of the right to self-declare a transgender identity, which has been available for the last eight years. There has been no explosion because people themselves can make their own moral judgements on the behaviour they see before them, and act appropriately on what they find.

10:0: Toxic Arguments

Any accountable campaigning must be grounded in reality. By presenting a selective history which failing to take account of these realities only heightens the tension between opposing sides and creates increasing alarm and concern. In my own work on reconciliation in tribal conflict situations I know that a major difficulty arises, not from the strength or violence of the actual campaigns, but from the creation by each side of their own versions of the perceived truths upon which their campaigns are based. As a consequence each side creates cartoons of the other, each determines that the other is entirely comprised of activists, and the vast groundswell of responsibility which comes from concerned men and women, transgender or otherwise is lost. Those cartoons are evident in the comments given above. It is also the perceived realities which are created by the believed false truths which give the campaigners tacit support. Of course abuses will occur, such as that reported in page 21 of the Times on the 12th October 2018¹⁹. The cartoons that are created mean that the abuses created by some are applied to all, and the protections currently present in the 2010 Equality act should have ensured that this abuse could never have taken place. I admire Debbie enormously for the work she has done, particularly with women’s groups, but I believe that she has destroyed her own arguments by taking a selective approach.

11:0: Moving Forward

The Economist published a series of series of invited essays on *“Transgender identities”* which has sought to uphold liberal values of open debate²⁰. Debbie’s own responses to them are contained in: Hayton, Debbie (2018): *“Society needs to dismantle sexism before revising legal definitions of sex”*. This was published in the “Economist” on the 11th July 2018²¹. In it she states that: *“The apparent clash between trans rights and women’s rights has created a storm but, in this feature, calm voices on both sides of the discussion are working towards solutions where everyone can feel secure, valued and respected for who we are”*. In this we both agree that the issues over self-declaration are

¹⁹ The Times, 12 October 2018: *“Trans predator who targeted women inmates jailed for life”*: p 21

²⁰ <https://www.economist.com/transgender>

²¹ Hayton, Debbie (2018): *“Society needs to dismantle sexism before revising legal definitions of sex”*. This article was first published by The Economist on 11 July 2018 It was part of a two-week discussion on transgender issues with ten contributors.

<https://debbiehayton.wordpress.com/2018/07/21/society-needs-to-dismantle-sexism-before-revising-legal-definitions-of-sex/>

much broader than just those of transgender behaviour and identities. However an objective approach must be taken which deals with all of the concerns and all of the facts.

I could expand Debbie's title to include "*Society needs to dismantle sexism and religious discrimination before revising legal definitions of sex*". However for the reasons I have stated. I also believe that we must not and cannot wait for society to do this for us. I am convinced that self-declaration is needed now, and not just through reform of the Gender Recognition Act. It must come from the recognition that many transgender people are presently identifying in a way that does not conform to a binary male or female gender identity. Any legislation that is enacted certainly should not force such people to conform to a binary role or to require that proof of surgical gender reassignment is needed to define the legitimacy of their identities, and also their moral approach. The change in passport and other legal documentation to allow non-binary definition to be made and the removal of the exemptions given to religious organisations in the 2010 Equality act to my mind are two other essential steps.

9:0 Reform or Replacement of the Gender Recognition Act

At the start of this article I noted that two completely different views about how atypical gender identities are created are currently held. For transsexuals, (as a generalisation), their understanding of history instead is one of a lifetime being forced to live in a gender role which one cannot identify with, with all of the anguish distress, rejection and high suicide rates that are involved. For many lesbians and feminists male to female transsexuals are predatory men who seek to exert power and domination over women, who manipulate femininity to their own desires and advantage by adopting a female role. However self-declaration changes society in many other ways. By their very need to find the legitimacy of their own identities, transgender people challenge the social order in any socially and gender divided societies and opposition to self-declaration will continue to be heard for as long as these gender-based divisions continue to exist.

The Government is currently conducting a consultation on how to make it easier for transgender people to change their legal gender on birth certificates. Details of this can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reform-of-the-gender-recognition-act-2004>. The closing date for this consultation is the 19th October 2018.

The report of the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee on Transgender Equality gives a great deal of supplementary information. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmwomeq/390/390.pdf>. Please complete this consultation for it is very important that these issues are fully explored and properly understood.

These are issues which create strong feelings and strong disagreements between many of us. We need to express these plainly and honestly while respecting the views that other people hold, and I hope that this is and has been my approach

Susan Gilchrist September 2018.