

I am very concerned about the new report, announced by Maria Miller, concerning transgender rights. I understand and am sympathetic to the problems faced by transgender people, and I welcome action from Government to tackle the discrimination trans people face.

However, the proposed change in the law has serious implications regarding the rights of women and children, which I feel have not been properly thought through.

If the law is changed to allow anyone to legally become a woman simply by declaring that they are a woman, that would make it impossible in practice to maintain sex-segregated spaces such as public toilets, changing rooms, prisons and specialist provision such as domestic violence or rape crisis centres.

Organisations who were worried about legal challenge on grounds of discrimination will be reluctant to question the sex of anybody in a single-sex space. Men who claim to be trans in order to access women-only spaces would have as much access to women's toilets and changing rooms as transwomen if this proposed legal change were to go ahead. There are plenty of examples of men who have dressed in women's clothes and gone on to assault women in toilets, changing rooms etc. and this proposed change would obviously make that a lot easier. Girls and women could no longer assume that service staff/security personnel would be prioritising their safety.

I am also very concerned about what kind of 'gender' training is proposed for teachers and in PSHE classes in schools. I would like reassurance that schoolchildren will not be taught that it's possible to be 'a girl in a boy's body,' a theory backed by no credible scientific evidence which only creates 'gender identity' confusion for children as well as contradicting accepted biological facts.

The vast majority of children grow out of any 'gender confusion' by adolescence, and the most likely outcome for these children, if left alone, is homosexuality. I would like reassurance that schools will not be expected to collude in telling a child they are the opposite sex, which would compromise teachers' professional integrity and reinforce the gender stereotypes that girls and boys are already bombarded with by highly gendered toy marketing. Teachers should be giving children the opposite message: that (for example) playing with dolls is no indication that a little boy is really a little girl. 'Gender variation' should be encouraged, not pathologised.

I feel very strongly that children should not be given the message that their bodies are "wrong" and they need to change them to fit their interests.

I am glad that the government is "very cautious about recommending gender recognition in respect of children aged under 16" but I am concerned that the government is considering reducing the amount of time required for assessment before puberty-blockers and cross-sex hormones can be prescribed, and makes the claim that delaying treatment risks more harm than providing it. The suicide risk figure for transgender youth is shocking, but as the age group in the referenced study was 'under the age of 26' this does not provide any evidence that the reason for suicidality is a delay in treatment. Underlying factors such as depression or psychological difficulties are not taken into account, nor the effects of the cross-sex hormone treatments themselves. It is therefore equally likely that suicidality is caused by transition, not alleviated by it, there is no way of knowing from this research alone. What are the mental and psychological effects of these off-label hormones on young bodies?

The government also states that puberty blockers are 'reversible' when in fact we have no idea of the effects on a child's brain. Blockers prevent children from maturing and almost inevitably lead on to cross-sex hormones, setting children off on a path of life-time medication and invasive treatments with some irreversible effects such as sterility. Children and adolescents do not have the maturity to fully understand choices which have life-long irreversible consequences. I think there should be more caution in the early treatment of children and young people, not less; more effort to understand underlying factors and more done to help children and teens accept themselves for who they are.

I'm especially concerned with the spike in the number of teenage girls suddenly declaring themselves trans and I would like to see some investigation into the question of why increasing numbers of young girls don't want to become women. The belief that you can 'identify' your way out of your biological sex is not an answer, although it may appear so to troubled teens. As the report defines 'trans' as a question only of identity, rather than a genuine body dysphoria, we will see more and more vulnerable young people identifying as the opposite sex in the expectation that it will solve all their problems.

There are more and more accounts from young women who 'transitioned' and then realised they made a mistake and are left with the irreversible effects of testosterone treatment, such as increased body hair and a deeper voice. I am concerned that this report makes it too easy to identify as 'trans' and I feel that altering your body to such an extent should be a last resort option for those who are truly suffering body dysphoria.

I assume that any change in the law would be the responsibility of the Home Office. I was hoping that you could raise these concerns with Theresa May on my behalf.

If you have any questions, or would like more information, please contact me. Thank you.

Yours sincerely