

Dear

I was relieved that the government, in their response in July to the recommendations of the Women and Equalities Select Committee's Transgender Equality report, is committed to monitoring and reviewing current legislation. Transgender people deserve full human rights and I fully support government measures to protect this group from discrimination. However, I have recently heard of four examples which suggest that "gender identity" is now being prioritised over "sex" as the legal distinction between men and women, a change which has serious implications for both the status and safety of women and girls.

The first was a report of a man who became "the first female to serve on the front line" in the British Army, having decided he was a woman and started hormones only two months previously, denying a female soldier her rightful and deserved first place. It is a biological impossibility for a man to be female.

There were also two media stories of violent males who will be housed in women's prisons because they identify as women, which obviously compromises the privacy, dignity and safety of female prisoners.

One of these offenders was referred to as a woman with no further elaboration in some media reports, including the BBC, even though the investigation into his transsexual status was the point of the story and motive for the crime. This is unfair media representation of women, who are rarely violent offenders.

Finally, Brighton & Hove Police circulated an event poster "Celebrating Women and Girls" which invited "all self-identifying women and girls" to attend. It is of huge concern that the police promote this definition of girls which permits them no boundaries, but means they must include males whether they like it or not.

These are only the most recent examples of an increasing number of media stories which define males and females as identities rather than sexes, a system which only further advantages men over women.

Redefining "sex" (a biological reality) to mean "gender identity" (a self-defined subjective feeling) renders men legally indistinguishable from women and extinguishes the independent legal existence of women. This means that the safety of women and girls is compromised, male violence can be hidden by being attributed to women and discrimination against women and girls is rendered invisible when men are included in areas such as awards, quotas, prizes or any initiative designed to support and advance women and girls in an area where they are disadvantaged or face discrimination.

The prison service and the police are the agencies which should be the most aware of the threat of male violence (including sexual violence) against women and girls. The recent government report on the level of sexual abuse in schools reflects the importance of measures to protect girls as a sex, which must include the right to the privacy and safety of single-sex facilities. We cannot meaningfully teach adolescents the importance of consent if legislation denies girls the most fundamental right to assert their boundaries: the right to *not* consent to having males in their spaces.

The published government guidelines for service providers is especially worrying for parents with daughters, as it suggests that any man may now use a women's public toilet or changing-room without being questioned by security personnel. The crimes of voyeurism and indecent exposure cease to exist if a man identifies as a woman, it is the girl who risks being criminalised for a hate crime if she recognises and names the person as male. She is coerced into accepting that a penis may be female. There is no evidence in this document that the privacy, dignity and safety of women and girls has even been considered.

Children are learning that what makes them a boy or a girl is a feeling in their head and not their male or female biology, an idea which inevitably relies on essentialist brain theories and stereotypes of behaviour, interests and appearance. The term "gender identity" itself is just another way of saying "pink brain" or "blue brain." As these stereotypes are particularly harmful for girls (placing them as the submissive, passive, decorative sex) this teaching is in direct contravention of anti-discriminatory measures in schools specifically designed to challenge limiting stereotypes (see for example NUT and EHRC teaching guides).

Teaching children that their authentic self is split off from the body is a recipe for mental ill-health, the creation of a problem for children and adolescents which we are seeing reflected in the numbers presenting to gender clinics. Children and adolescents are being taught that "feeling like the opposite sex" means that they actually are, yet at the same time they need sex-change medication and surgery.

We should not be teaching kids that they need to medically alter their bodies to match their interests, we should be teaching the opposite: that boys can be "feminine" and girls can be "masculine" and they are fine as they are. There has been no public debate on the ethics of the sterilisation and life-long medicalisation of non-conforming children and adolescents. Young people are being drawn into a regressive and incoherent belief system they lack the maturity to understand and should be protected from. This survey of 200 women who have detransitioned or reidentified shows that we need to be asking questions about why so many young people, especially girls, are now identifying as transgender, and not just jumping to offer them sex-change treatments:

<http://guideonragingstars.tumblr.com/post/149877706175/female-detransition-and-reidentification-survey>

It is important for girls not to be coerced into accepting a new definition of themselves as a disembodied identity, that female biology is irrelevant and unconnected to who they are as girls. Girls are losing the right to name and talk about their own female bodies; to do so is considered "transphobic."

The distinction between men and women, boys and girls, remains biological sex whether or not some people believe they were born as the "wrong" one. It is impossible for a male to become female, or a female to become male; children need to know this fact and the law needs to reflect it.

I am very concerned about the futures of our daughters if the female sex is no longer legally recognised as a distinct group with boundaries, as well as the futures of all children being diagnosed by an ideology with no basis in science, medical knowledge or child and adolescent developmental psychology.

I would like reassurance that the impact on the human rights of women and girls, as a legally protected sex, will be assessed through the due process of an Equalities Impact Assessment before any new legislation is considered by government. I would also like assurance that women will be part of the monitoring and review process and that children's rights and protections are included in any review.

I would be grateful if you would pass my comments to the Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP.

Thank you very much

Yours sincerely