



Submission on the Review of the Gender Recognition Act 2015

LGBT Ireland is a national organisation which provides quality services to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) people across the country. Informed by the issues and experiences raised through our frontline services, we also provide training and advocacy support, to enhance the visibility, inclusion and rights of the LGBT people living in Ireland.

Contacts in relation to Gender Identity and Expression to our services:

In 2017, we supported hundreds of people, of all ages, on gender identity and expressions related issues. These contacts included;

- People who were struggling to understand and accept their gender identity or expression.
- People who needed support to open up to their family, friends and wider circle, about their gender identity or gender expression.
- People with trans and non-binary identities seeking information on legal and medical pathways and support services.
- Family members of, or professionals working with, trans and non-binary identified people, looking for information and support to better understand trans and non-binary identities, to enable them to support and advocate for their loved one or client/student.

Based on the experiences and issues raised in the contacts we received, we would ask that the following issues are considered in the review of the Gender Recognition Act 2015:

1. Trans and non-binary young people who are 16 and 17 years of age:

Over 33% of people who contact our web chat service are under the age of 18 years. Frequently we support young people who are 16 or 17 and who have a trans or non-binary gender identity. For these young people being able to have their gender recognised would have a significant positive impact on their daily lives, as they move through the education system and make plans for their lives ahead.

- We would ask that the legislation be widened to allow this age group be permitted access to gender recognition certificates on the same basis of self-declaration and the same process as over 18s.
- We would also ask that the review group consider extending the legislation to allow this age group to independently receive gender recognition, without needing the consent of their parents or guardians.

2. Trans and non-binary young people who are under 16 years of age:

In our service, we also support young people who are under the age of 16 who have trans and non-binary identities.

- We would urge the review group to consider extending the gender recognition provisions to include under 16 year olds, who have the consent of their parents.

In response to the increasing number of calls into our own service, and to TENI, from family members seeking support and information about a loved one's trans or non-binary identity, we have developed a new Family Helpline service in partnership with TENI. This service, which will be volunteer lead, will open at the end of March to offer a first point of contact for family members who are struggling, or have questions, relating to their loved ones' gender identity or expression.

However, there is an urgent need for a dedicated Family Support service to be established to provide expert guidance and ongoing support to family members and young people, to support them to safely navigate through family difficulties relating to the young person's gender identity.

- We would strongly urge the review group to consider the need for resources to be made available to BeLonG To Youth Services and TENI to establish a specialist Family Support Service.
- We would also call for resources to be made available to develop and deliver training in this area, for all staff working in children and family services.

3. **Non-Binary People:**

- We would also call for the revision of the Gender Recognition Act to include non-binary people and others who do not want their gender to be specified.
- To be inclusive, we would recommend that gender markers on gender recognition certificates and other Government identity documents include X to indicate Gender not specified and NB to indicate Non-Binary.

4. **Intersex People:**

In September 2017, the Council of Europe's Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination unanimously passed a resolution which recommended the following actions by Member States to promote the rights and eliminate discrimination of Intersex People.¹ We would call on the review group to recommend all of these actions are included in this review.

- Member States should prohibit 'normalising surgery' and defer treatments that seek to alter the sex characteristics of intersex children until they are able to participate in the decision. Health care should be multidisciplinary, holistic and patient-centred, and psychosocial support should be made available both to intersex people and their families.
- To protect the right to private life, birth registration systems should allow sufficient flexibility to accommodate the needs of intersex people, and quick, transparent and accessible legal gender recognition procedures must also be available.
- States should collect more data and carry out further research into these matters, and consider granting compensation to victims of past treatments. They should ensure that anti-discrimination legislation effectively protects intersex people and carry out campaigns to raise awareness among professionals and the general public as regards the situation and rights of intersex people.

¹ <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-en.asp?FileID=24027&lang=en>