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UK gov't scraps key transgender rights reform

Britain's government has dropped plans to let transgender people change gender legally without a medical diagnosis, after two years of heated debate.

By Rachel Savage

Thomson Reuters Foundation (22.09.2020) – <https://bit.ly/3iburiQ> – Transgender people will not be allowed to legally change gender without a medical diagnosis, the British government said on Tuesday, scrapping a proposed reform that sparked furious debate between LGBT+ and women's rights campaigners.

The government launched a consultation two years ago on overhauling the 2004 Gender Recognition Act (GRA) to allow “self-ID” in England and Wales – a reform opponents said could allow predatory men access to women-only spaces such as toilets.

While the “self-ID” proposal was scrapped, the cost for trans people to change birth certificates will be cut from 140 pounds (\$180) to a “nominal amount” and the process will be moved online.

Trans rights advocates expressed disappointment at Tuesday’s announcement on the outcome of the consultation.

“It’s a shocking failure in leadership,” Nancy Kelley, the chief executive of Stonewall, Britain’s largest LGBT+ advocacy group, said in an emailed statement.

“While these moves will make the current process less costly and bureaucratic, they don’t go anywhere near far enough toward meaningfully reforming the Act to make it easier for all trans people to go about their daily life.”

Countries including Ireland, Portugal, Norway and Argentina have “self-ID”, allowing trans people to legally change gender via a legal declaration and without doctors’ involvement.

Almost two thirds of the 102,818 respondents to the British consultation said they backed removing the requirement for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, a government report showed.

More than three quarters said they supported scrapping the need for trans people to show they had lived in their gender for a specific time period – currently two years.

But women's rights activists who had opposed the introduction of "self-ID", welcomed the news.

"It's really good news and it acknowledges a fair balance between trans people and women's rights," Nicola Williams of Fair Play for Women, which campaigned against the reform, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

She said the group's priorities would now be looking at how to ensure "privacy, safety and fairness" when it came to trans people accessing women-only areas such as hospital wards, prisons and changing rooms.

In the United States, women's rights groups said in 2016 that 200 municipalities that allowed trans people to use rape crisis facilities and domestic violence shelters saw no rise in sexual violence or public safety issues as a result.

Some British trans rights campaigners expressed relief that the sometimes-toxic debate over the issue may now cool down.

Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling weighed into the issue earlier this year, saying she did not support “self-ID” as it would be “offering cover to predators”, a view she said was informed by her experience of domestic violence.

“Hopefully it means that so much negative attention that has been sent our way as communities can be quietened,” said Cara English of advocacy group Gendered Intelligence.

She said that their focus would now be “things that affect us in a much more material way”, including healthcare and hate crime.

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Notice: Undefined index: et_footer_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

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