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## **Disney, Google, Microsoft back trans rights amid fierce British debate**

***Trans rights have become a contentious issue in Britain as the government decides whether to ease the rules on legally changing gender.***

By Rachel Savage

Thomson Reuters Foundation (14.09.2020) - <https://tmsnrt.rs/2E0YZpq> - Dozens of organisations including Disney, Google and Microsoft weighed into a fierce debate over transgender rights in Britain on Monday, writing to Prime Minister Boris Johnson to ask him to support making it easier for people to legally change gender.

Trans rights have become a contentious issue since the government launched a consultation into reforming the Gender Recognition Act in 2018, with opponents saying easing the rules could potentially let predatory men into women-only spaces.

Multinational companies were joined by universities and trans advocacy groups in the open letter to Johnson, which drew 83 signatories. Dozens more, including BP and Unilever, pledged support for trans rights in an online statement.

"We wanted to get this public statement out that says no matter what you're reading from certain sources, that's not reality," said Bobbi Pickard, a BP project manager who came out as trans in 2018 and who spearheaded the open letter initiative.

"Being trans is something that's a naturally occurring form of human development," she said. "We all want our employees to flourish in their careers and their lives and trans people should be allowed to do that as well."

Britain's government has repeatedly delayed its response to the trans law consultation, and in June local media reported that it was set to scrap plans to let trans people change their gender on birth certificates without a medical diagnosis.

A spokesman for the government's Equalities Office said in an email that officials were working through the results of the consultation and "will be responding shortly".

Countries including Ireland, Norway and Argentina allow trans people to change their legal gender without a medical diagnosis, known as "self-ID".

Prominent figures including "Harry Potter" author J.K. Rowling have expressed concern that "self-ID" could allow men into women-only spaces such as toilets and changing rooms, endangering women and girls.

Monday's letter, which was initially sent privately in July with fewer signatories, pledged support for trans staff and urged the government to support the consultation's findings.

"We all strive to be trans-inclusive organisations and believe that a diverse workforce, including trans employees, offers greater business success," it said.

"Failing to honour the government's commitment to implement the consultation findings, and even increasing restrictions on trans people's ability to live authentically, benefits no one," the letter added.

Robbie de Santos of Stonewall UK, an LGBT+ advocacy group that helped coordinate the campaign, said numerous companies had got in touch to say they wanted to show the British government that there was support for trans rights.

"Actually that support is not being heard in the mix of the often very toxic social media environment," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

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## **Avanti West Coast to launch UK's first Pride train entirely staffed by an LGBTQ+ crew**

ITV News (25.08.2020) - <https://bit.ly/2YYKCcK> - Avanti West Coast is launching the UK's first fully wrapped Pride train entirely staffed by an LGBTQ+ crew for its first official service.

After Covid-19 forced the cancellation of Pride events across the country, which Avanti West Coast had planned to support, the intercity rail operator has completely wrapped one of its iconic Pendolinos with the progressive Pride flag.

The train operator has adopted the most recent iteration of the Pride flag which sees the addition of the colours black, brown, light blue, pink and white to bring people of colour, transgender people and those living with or who have been lost to HIV/AIDS to the forefront highlighting Avanti West Coast's progressive commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Billed as the biggest Pride flag the UK has seen on the side of a train, the 11-carriage, 265 metre-long train will be waved off by Avanti West Coast staff and members of the LGBTQ+ community at Euston and will be welcomed in at Manchester Piccadilly station on Tuesday 25 August.

Discussing how Pride means more for the diversity and inclusion of people up and down the West Coast Main Line, Avanti West Coast Executive Director – Commercial, Sarah Copley said: "I'm delighted to be launching our new Avanti West Coast Pride Train which represents everyone in the LGBTQ+ community. It is a symbol of our commitment to diversity and inclusion as it travels up and down the West Coast Main Line. We Live Proud 365 days a year, not just today."

She continued: "I am so proud to be a part of a business where our people represent the communities we serve.

We are always listening to our people and customers to ensure our diversity and inclusion strategy is relevant. Our new train livery is a powerful example of keeping the conversation going”.

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## **Plans to drop gender recognition reforms would see UK plummet in LGBT equality rankings**

***Government is set to scrap plans to allow people to change their legal gender by self-identifying as male or female.***

Amnesty International (14.06.2020) - <https://bit.ly/2A763Pw> - Responding to reports that the UK Government plans to drop key reforms to the Gender Recognition Act, Chiara Capraro, Amnesty International’s Women’s Rights Programme Director, said:

“The UK has always prided itself on being a champion of LGBT equality – if it’s serious about this, it will update the Gender Recognition Act to ensure trans people can enjoy their rights, free from discrimination.

“Reports that the Government intends to scrap plans to bring gender recognition laws in line with human rights standards are extremely worrying.

“More than two years ago, the Government rightly set out a plan to reform the out-of-date Gender Recognition Act - a U-turn on this would send a chilling message that the UK is a hostile place for trans people.

“Perpetuating wrong stereotypes of trans women as a danger to other women is dehumanising and wrong, and risks further inciting hate crimes against trans people.

“The UK is already slipping further and further down the European rankings for LGBT equality - falling from 3rd to 9th place over the past three years. The proposed move would no doubt see the UK plummet even further.

“The UK has always prided itself on being a champion of LGBT equality – if it’s serious about this, it will update the Gender Recognition Act to ensure trans people can enjoy their rights, free from discrimination.”

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## **UK moves to ban trans youth from getting gender affirming health care**

***A minister said she wants to protect transgender youth from "irreversible decisions" by forcing them to undergo puberty as the wrong gender.***

By Alex Bollinger

LGBTQ Nation (23.04.2020) - <https://bit.ly/3f18jrh> - The U.K.’s Minister for Women and Equalities Liz Truss has announced a multi-pronged attack on transgender rights that could ban gender affirming health care for transgender youth.

Truss, a member of the Conservative Party, announced in a meeting with the Women and Equalities Select Committee that she would be putting forth amendments for the Gender Recognition Act, the 2004 law that allows transgender people to correct their legal gender.

She said that there would be three areas of focus for the proposed amendments. One of them was a call for an end to gender affirming care for transgender people under the age of 18 to protect them “from decisions that they could make, that are irreversible in the future.”

“I believe strongly that adults should have the freedom to lead their lives as they see fit,” said Truss, “but I think it’s very important that while people are still developing their decision-making capabilities that we protect them from making those irreversible decisions.”

This affects puberty blockers and access to hormones, because gender confirmation surgery already isn’t provided for people under 18 by the U.K.’s National Health Service.

Puberty blockers delay certain irreversible changes to transgender people’s bodies so that they can either better understand what they want to do or avoid dysphoric feelings that come with going through puberty and developing secondary sex characteristics that don’t align with one’s gender identity.

They have been shown to lower the lifelong risk of suicidal thoughts among transgender people who wanted them as teens. But in order for them to be effective, they have to be taken before the onset of puberty. That is, well before the age of 18.

Laura Russell of the LGBTQ organization Stonewall said that they’re “concerned” with the minister’s comments.

“We’d welcome an opportunity to discuss this with the Minister, as it’s crucial all young people who are questioning their gender identity are able to access high-quality, timely support,” she said. “Every trans young person should be given the care they need, in an informed and supportive manner, so they’re able to lead a happy, healthy life.”

Mermaids, a transgender youth organization, was more direct.

“It would be an extraordinary move for the Minister for Women and Equalities to support the introduction of a new form of inequality into British medical practice,” said a spokesperson for the organization.

A U.K. transgender man who was only identified as “Alex” told iNews that starting hormones at age 16 saved his life.

“It really reduces the dysphoria and live my life. I’ve got a friend who hasn’t [got hormones], and sometimes he won’t even speak because of how high his voice is. He can’t deal with that.”

If he didn’t have access to testosterone, he said, “I would probably be suicidal. I would be in a pretty bad place.”

One of Truss’s other areas of focus for Truss was “the protection of single-sex spaces,” which she called “extremely important.”

Anti-transgender activists in the U.K. often say that transgender women are “biological males” and usually use the expression “single-sex spaces” to refer to areas where cisgender women, transgender men, and non-binary people who were assigned female at birth are allowed to enter, to the exclusion of transgender women.

Last, Truss said that the amendments would maintain "the proper checks and balances in the system" when it comes to "transgender adults" but didn't elaborate further.

She didn't specify a timeline for the amendments other than that a review would happen this summer.

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## **Half of LGBT+ women are outed at work**

By Jamie Wareham

Forbes (20.04.2020) - <https://bit.ly/2RRI6kO> - Half of LGBT+ women are being outed at work, a new survey reveals.

Women are going back in the closet when they get their first job, feeling unable to report issues to HR and struggling in "male-dominated and heteronormative environments."

Released ahead of Lesbian Visibility Week, the new research by DIVA Magazine and Kantar looked at the experiences of LGBT+ women's work life, financial stability, well-being, relationships and their overall feelings of safety.

The survey shows that LGBT+ women are fed up of male-dominated LGBT+ spaces and campaigns, feel most safe at home due to the violence and uncertainty they face out in the world and are facing disproportionate problems at work.

Unsurprisingly the women surveyed, who already face a higher number of barriers in the workplace, feel they are a 'minority within a minority' because of their queer identity.

Although three in four respondents are open about their sexual orientation to most of their work colleagues, the youngest age group (16-24) are far less likely to be out at work.

Only one in three of those under the age of 24 feel able to be out at work, which Kantar concludes that with LGBT+ people coming out younger than ever, that many are 'going back into the closet' when they get their first job.

It's currently estimated in the graduate LGBT+ community, that six in ten, regardless of their gender identity, go back in the closet when they get their first job.

In a worrying statistic, the most common homophobic experience LGBT+ women face in the workplace is being outed. Half of the respondents saying they have been through this discriminatory ordeal.

The research, which also looked at trans women's experiences found that one in four transgender people feel that they have faced barriers in their current workplace due to their gender identity.

### **Research reveals discrimination LGBT+ women face for Lesbian Visibility Week**

"The DIVA research highlights the challenges that LGBTQI women face; feeling invisible and unsupported in key areas of their lives," Linda Riley, Publisher of DIVA magazine, says.

The research is being launched as part of a week of events, extending the Lesbian Visibility Day on 26 April each year, into an extended celebration of queer and trans women's experiences.

Claire Harvey, MBE, GB Paralympian, Diversity and Inclusion Consultant and DIVA Development Week Lead, believes with the current COVID-19 pandemic, now more than ever it is vital that there is a focus on women's lives:

"We use the word community all too often, but what does it actually mean? For me, it means a sense of belonging, visibility and value.

"LGBTQI women are a diverse, talented and often unheard group – so now, more than ever, it's important that we build up our community and help those who are most isolated feel connected."

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