



## **RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON REFORM OF THE GENDER RECOGNITION ACT 2004 FROM THE CATHOLIC UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN**

1. The Catholic Union is an organisation founded in 1870 which represents the views of the Catholic laity to Government, Parliament and other public bodies.
2. In our view, the Government should proceed with caution and should not amend the Gender Recognition Act 2004 in the various ways that are discussed in this Consultation, at least at this stage.
3. If gender dysphoria is a recognised medical condition, then the law clearly needs to cater for it in an appropriate way. However, given the potential for damage to vulnerable people (for example, children or adolescents) in not being rigorous in such a sensitive, politically charged and complex area, the Government should act prudently and should not be unduly influenced by current trends in gender ideology.
4. As we understand it, the state of medical knowledge and experience in this area is not sufficiently advanced to allow for appropriate policies (such as the proposed amendment of the 2004 Act) to be formulated with sufficient clarity and with the backing of a consensus of medical opinion. In particular, some of the possible amendments to the 2004 Act could have the effect of infringing the rights of others, e.g. the risk of abuse that may exist where men identifying as women are accommodated with women.
5. It follows that it would at this stage be safer not to move away from the present model of requiring a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, a report of treatment received and the other procedural requirements for obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate. It also follows that the exemptions currently provided in the 2004 Act ought to be retained, at least until considerably more work has been done on the complex problems that arise in this area. If the 2004 Act were amended to remove the requirement of medical input and so move to a self-identification model then the Act would no longer be about accommodating a condition but rather recognising a feeling about identity. That is very different from the way these issues have been traditionally understood and therefore we reiterate our concern that considerable caution should be exercised before introducing legislative change.
6. In addition, there is at least anecdotal evidence of a real threat of bullying and intimidation for those who seek to debate these issues in an open way. In such a sensitive area where medical

research is still being conducted and where some people may be at a vulnerable stage of their lives, it is imperative that free and open debate is protected and differing views tolerated, so that proper and lasting policy decisions can be made and vulnerable people protected.

7. Finally, nothing in the paragraphs above should be taken as expressing any lack of empathy with, let alone fear towards, those who experience gender dysphoria. We respectfully concur with the Statement on Gender issued by the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales in April 2018 which concludes as follows:

“As we continue to reflect on these issues, we hope for a renewed appreciation of the fundamental importance of sexual difference in our culture and the accompaniment of those who experience conflict in their sense of self and God-given identity. We all have a duty to protect the most vulnerable.”

Catholic Union of Great Britain  
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