

GENDER IDENTITY CRISIS: Waiting lists are harming LGBTQ+ mental health

Waiting lists for Gender Identity clinics are at an all-time high, with many young people experiencing gender dysphoria and self-medicating.



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With recent news of Boris Johnson set to scrap plans to allow people to change their legal gender by “self-identifying” as male or female, many trans and non-binary individuals are now facing a long period of uncertainty.

Presently, the Gender Recognition Act requires trans people to go through a long process to change their birth certificates.

For this reason, many do not, and instead rely on the protection afforded by the 2010 Equality Act. Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act - to safeguard transgender people against discrimination and that can be based on self-identification alone.

The 2010 Equality Act discloses: "a person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex."

Nico, who identifies as non-binary has been waiting to see a gender identity specialist since summer of 2018 “I’ve experienced very low mental health which has led me to self-harm to relieve the pain...

...It almost feels like my identity is being dismissed by the government. It’s harmful to not only myself but also many other trans and non-binary individuals”

The government is failing trans individuals in what is their right to self-identify, Nico also added “You are living every day with a war going on inside, one that no one is aware of.”

Labour MP Keir Starmer has been vocal in his support for trans rights saying, “I think the trans community deserve more protection that they’ve got” and rejects the framing of trans rights as being in “conflict” with women’s rights.

Research by Stonewall in 2017 found that 41% of trans men and trans women who responded said they had experienced a hate crime or incident because of their gender identity in the past twelve months. Further research by Stonewall found that two in five trans people (41 per cent) agreed that healthcare staff lacked understanding of trans health needs.



Credit: Getty Images

Statistics from the Home Office show that hate crimes against LGBTQ+ people have risen in recent years, with increases linked to sexual orientation and trans identity. Since 2013, the number of hate crimes reported to police have more than doubled, which also showed a large increase from 2019 in offences against people based on sexual orientation.

Whilst some young people are turning to private healthcare due to long waiting times under the NHS, unfortunately that’s not the case for many other young trans and non-binary people.

However, accessing treatment for gender dysphoria within England can be difficult. The NHS, a publicly funded national health care system, currently has only seven GICs in England for adults, and one clinic for adolescents (GIREs, 2015). As a result, those with gender dysphoria often experience lengthy waiting times for consultation. This is leading to many mental health difficulties for trans and non-binary individuals.