



## Craig Whittaker MP

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### **Transgender and Equality and Women**

Thank you for your email about the Women and Equalities Select Committee report on transgender equality, and the debate on 1 December, during which a number of important issues were discussed.

I would like to assure you that there is a strong commitment to achieving equality for all. There is no hierarchy of equality. The profile of transgender equality has rightly been raised in the past few years as many transgender people still encounter prejudice and discrimination. This, however, has not been to the detriment to women. The equal rights of women and of transgender individuals are being strongly promoted.

The question of altering the Gender Recognition Act was raised in the debate. I am assured that any change to the minimum age, or on moving to a self-declaration process, would have to be informed by more evidence on the case for change and the implications of the policy.

Having a positive experience of childhood is vital, especially for transgender children as they come to realise who they truly are. I know you are concerned about children's gender identity and I agree we need to challenge gender stereotypes. However, I am assured that the NHS's policy for prescribing cross-sex hormones to gender variant young people is consistent with international guidelines and best practice.

Some concerns have been raised about access to single-sex and separate sex services by transgender individuals. Under the Equality Act 2010, some organisations may treat people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment differently in particular circumstances when it comes to accessing single- and separate-sex services, such as services provided to survivors of domestic abuse. The guidance on the issue makes it explicitly clear that the exception can only be used in exceptional circumstances and where there is no less discriminatory way of providing the service. The law in this area needs to operate fairly and is not abused. I am assured that Ministers will consider further evidence and representation from all affected parties before taking any future policy decisions.

Following a review, it has been confirmed that transgender offenders will now be managed in the gender with which they identify rather than the sex assigned to them at birth. However, there will still be a minority of cases where this is not possible.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP