

Written evidence submitted by Michael Steven to the Transgender Equality Inquiry

I am a 37 year old Transgender man. I am the Vice President of The Belfast Butterfly Club, a support group for Transgender people in Northern Ireland. I attended the Belfast Gender Identity Clinic for 9 years. I have chosen not to take hormones or surgery as I am now happy with my transition.

Executive Summary

List of unnecessary barriers to gaining a GRC. Same sex marriage inequality is still affecting Transgender people in Northern Ireland. Transphobia needs to be recognised as a hate crime. Some NHS doctors are still refusing to acknowledge Transgender people. There are still barriers to treatment in NHS Fertility Clinics that affect Transgender people. Some jobs are still discriminating against Transgender people at interview stage

1. It took me nine years to get a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). A big part of this delay was having to find a specialist in Gender Identity, a doctor and a solicitor to fill in parts of the Gender Recognition application form.

2. I found applying for a GRC to be expensive and unnecessary, I do not think any medical professionals should be required to apply for a GRC, as I believe that Transgender individuals should be able to self-determine their own genders, as they can in Argentina. Having to pay the Gender Recognition Panel to consider my application, I found to be completely absurd, especially since not one member of the panel had even met me.

3. Another thing I found ridiculous about the Gender Recognition process, was having to keep a lot of what I consider to be unnecessary documents for two years, to prove that I had been living in my preferred gender for 2 years. This is difficult for people like myself who have limited living space and those who may have difficulties with organisation. I found applying for my GRC to be a test of my organisational abilities, rather than a test of my gender identity.

4. As I have now got my Gender Recognition Certificate, I can no longer marry my Male to Female partner, who does not have a Gender Recognition Certificate in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is now the only part of the United Kingdom who still refuse to recognise same sex marriages. This has put a huge strain on my relationship.

5. I experienced 80 Transphobic hate incidents at my previous address, however as neither the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), nor the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland had Transphobia listed as a hate crime at the time, I found it difficult to get the necessary points to be moved to safer housing.

6. I have also had problems accessing NHS services. A hospital doctor who was giving me treatment, refused to use my preferred pronouns and new legal name in written letters regarding myself, even after I had made the doctor aware that I had changed my name and title by deed poll on several different occasions previously.

7. My Transgender partner and I also experienced Transphobia at an NHS fertility clinic, in which the consultant asked me for my birth name and then used this name and not my legal name in future correspondence. The consultant also refused to give

my partner free sperm storage before she started cross sex hormones. We were treated like a cross- dressing heterosexual couple, rather than a Transgender couple. The reason for refusal of free sperm storage was that we were in "a relationship" and it was made clear to us that my partner could have had free sperm storage if she was not in a relationship.

8. I was considering applying for a local Government job in Northern Ireland before I obtained my GRC but I did not apply, as this Government department insisted that I furnish them with my birth certificate and no other proof of identity would be accepted. I found this to be a discriminatory practice, that effectively barred transgender people from applying for local Government jobs in Northern Ireland.

9. I am asking the Government to make the issue of GRC's free for everyone without the need for medical intervention, they should be given on the basis of self-determination. I am also asking the Government to ensure that same sex marriage legislation is enacted in Northern Ireland, as this is impacting on Transgender people's daily lives. The PSNI and Housing Executive in Northern Ireland must also have Transphobia listed as a hate crime, to ensure that Transgender people can be allocated safer housing under the Common Housing Points Scheme. NHS doctors should not be allowed to refuse to use Transgender people's new legal names and pronouns or refuse to give them Fertility treatment. Government departments should not be able to insist that birth certificates are provided during job interviews, as this is discriminatory to Transgender people.