

## YOUR VOICE MATTERS

### A guide to contacting your MP and getting their support for reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004

This guide offers trans people and allies tips for gaining their MP's support for reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004, which would de-medicalise and streamline the process of legal gender recognition.

The guide includes:

- Why now is a crucial time to contact your MP about Gender Recognition Act reform
- How to contact your MP by email
- How to set up a meeting with your MP
- Specific actions you can ask your MP to take in support of reform:
  - Tabling a parliamentary question
  - Speaking about Gender Recognition Act Reform in the House of Commons
  - Writing a letter to the Minister for Women and Equalities, Penny Mordaunt MP
- How to follow up about any actions your MP takes

We hope this guide gives you all you need to lobby your MP but if you've any questions or want to chat through any part of contacting or meeting your MP, do get in touch with us at [trans@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:trans@stonewall.org.uk)

## WHY SHOULD I CONTACT MY MP NOW?

In July 2017, the Government [announced](#) that '*proposals to streamline and de-medicalise the process for changing gender will be part of a broad consultation of the legal system that underpins gender transition, the Gender Recognition Act*'.

This was welcome news but, months later, the consultation still hasn't been published for England and Wales. The delay has created a vacuum, which opponents of reform have filled with nasty misinformation about the implications of reform. However, in May 2018, the new Women and Equalities Minister Penny Mordaunt, committed to publishing the consultation before the parliamentary summer break in mid-July.

The consultation and reforms need to include proposals that will benefit all trans people. **Your voice is critical** in making this happen. While trans voices are the most powerful, cis allies can add to the pressure by calling on their MPs to listen to their trans constituents.

Contact your MP. Let them know why reform is needed. Why it's needed now. Use your experience and views to inspire your MP to listen to trans people in their community and to support **the process towards reform**.

The Scottish Government has already gathered evidence on a wide range of proposals and questions, on issues including: self-declaration, lowering the age at which you can obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate and legal recognition for non-binary people.

## WHAT DOES MY MP DO?

Each MP represents the people living in their local area (or constituency).

They normally spend at least three days a week in Parliament, speaking in debates and voting on laws. They might take part in campaigning events or be a member of a committee that investigates the work of Government, to make sure that it's doing its job properly.

The rest of the time, they're back in their constituency, holding advice surgeries and working with the local community on the issues that affect them. **This includes the reform of the Gender Recognition Act.**

It's their job to listen to their constituents and represent them. If they hear the real-life impact that an issue is having on someone who lives in their local area, it's their duty to listen - and your right to be heard. Knowing that something is affecting a constituent is a really powerful way to motivate and encourage MPs to do something about it in Parliament.

## HOW DO I GET IN TOUCH MY MP?

To find out who your local MP is, go to [WritetoThem.com](http://WritetoThem.com) and enter your postcode. This will give your MP's email address and enable you to send a message directly to them.

*If you want to know a bit more about your MPs background and how they've voted on LGBT equality issues in the past, email [trans@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:trans@stonewall.org.uk)*

## WHAT SHOULD I SAY WHEN I CONTACT MY MP?

As long as you're clear in explaining why you're concerned about Gender Recognition Act Reform, and that you'd like to share your experiences, there are no specific rules. Your MP will want to know that you're one of their constituents, so include your address or just your postcode at the bottom of your email.

Don't worry about your email being perfect – it's much more important that you send it, rather than getting bogged down in the details. Your MP wants to hear from you as you're their constituent. And, as they're your representative, **you have a right to get in touch and raise the issues that are important to you.** You may also want to refer your MP to briefings on the Stonewall website, such as [The Truth About Trans](#) for more information.

It can be really useful to have a face to face meeting so, if you feel comfortable with the idea, ask for a meeting to discuss your concerns in more detail. Lots of MPs hold public surgeries, where they meet with members of the community and discuss their concerns, on Thursday, Friday or Saturday. The dates will be published on your MP's website. When you email them, suggest meeting them at one of these surgeries if it's convenient to you. If you're able to come to Parliament, suggest meeting them in Westminster on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, or invite them to a community group meeting. Whatever works best for you!

If you want us to take a look at your email to your MP before you send it, or get our thoughts on your plans for meeting your MP, we'd be happy to help. Just email [trans@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:trans@stonewall.org.uk)

#### Notes on venues

If you're meeting your MP in Parliament, you'll have to go through airport-style security to enter. This might mean removing layers of clothing (like coats or jumpers) and your ID might be required.

If you meet your MP in their constituency, all you need to provide is your postcode, to prove you live in their constituency.

## WHAT CAN I ASK MY MP TO DO?

A meeting is your opportunity to discuss the things that matter to you. If you feel comfortable doing so, share your own experience of the current law and why you want to see it change. You'll be making it clear to your MP that by supporting the reform they'll be helping (and potentially winning future votes from) their constituents.

If the meeting's going well, or you get a supportive reply to your email, ask them to take the steps below. It will help increase the pressure on Government to ensure the reforms proposed will really benefit trans people.

### 1. Ask them to table a Written Question

MPs can submit questions to relevant departments (in this case, the Government Equalities Office) and they receive a written response from the Minister. You can find examples of Written Questions on the Parliament website [here](#).

Ask your MP to table a Written Question about what the consultation will include when it is published. You can ask them to table questions about issues that are particularly important to you, such as the inclusion of non-binary people, self-declaration or removing the spousal veto.

This will make it clear to Penny Mordaunt MP, the Minister for Women and Equalities, that lots of people are calling for the consultation and want to see it published as soon as possible.

**Q** Asked by **Sarah Champion** (Rotherham) Asked on: 13 March 2018

**Women and Equalities** © 132331

**Gender Recognition Act 2004**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when she plans to publish the consultation on reform of the **Gender Recognition Act 2004** announced on 23 July 2017.

*An example of a Written Question on the Gender Recognition Act (tabled by Labour MP for Rotherham, Sarah Champion MP)*

### 2. Ask them to raise the Gender Recognition Act when they're speaking in the House of Commons

There are lots of opportunities for MPs to ask ministers about certain issues. Ministers have to answer Oral Questions in Parliament on a regular basis – including the Minister for Women and Equalities.

There are lots of different debates happening in the House of Commons all the time. Ask your MP if they know of any opportunities to raise Gender Recognition Act reform, and to raise it when they can.

### 3. Ask them to write to the Minister

Your MP can write to the Minister for Women and Equalities on your behalf. Ask them to do so. In their letter, your MP can tell the Minister that a constituent has come to them about the need for the consultation and pass on the issues you raised in your meeting.

## CAN I TAKE SOMEONE TO THE MEETING WITH ME?

Absolutely. If you feel more comfortable with a friend, relative or other ally coming along, invite them too. You can also split what you talk about. So, if you have a friend who feels more confident talking about the law, you can ask them to kick off the conversation, and then share your personal experience.

You might also want to invite your MP to a local community group meeting. It's a great way for MPs to meet lots of their constituents and hear many different experiences at one time. And, for any group members who might feel less confident about going to meet their MP, it's a chance to make their voice heard in a familiar setting.

## I'VE HAD A MEETING OR A RESPONSE FROM MY MP. WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Check to see if your MP has tabled a question or made a contribution by setting up a [TheyWorkForYou alert](#). If they promised to take action they'll probably share information with you. If you don't hear from them for a couple of weeks, email them asking if there's any more information they need, and reminding them of their commitment. If you *do* hear from them and they *have* taken action, remember to reply, thanking them and encouraging them to stay in touch about any further developments.

Once you've had your meeting, please let the team at Stonewall to know how it went, or how your MP replied to your email. If your MP had specific questions (for example, about spousal veto or other countries' systems of self-identification), we have briefings we can share with you that you can send on to them.

## WE'RE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU!

Any questions about what's in the guide? Want to check through what you're planning on sending, or chat to someone about your MP's background? Email [trans@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:trans@stonewall.org.uk) and our trans inclusion and policy teams can help! We're also happy to talk on the phone – call us on 020 7593 1850 and ask for a member of the trans inclusion or policy teams.

Thank you for your support in getting this vital consultation published and taking the next step in improving the lives of trans people.