



## About this call for evidence

The newly established Women and Equalities Committee has announced its first inquiry which will focus on transgender equality. The committee will consider how far, and in what ways, trans people still have yet to achieve full equality; and how the outstanding issues

- 1.4. Many older trans people report fear of experiencing transphobia if they require care services, both from staff and fellow patients or residents; fears which are too often realised. To combat this all health and care settings should provide trans equality training for all staff and have accessible equality, anti-bullying and confidentiality policies which clearly include trans people in their remit.
- 1.5. Trans people may have extra financial issues to consider in later life related to any legal change of gender and they may also be at risk of being on a low income due at least in part to having faced discrimination in the workplace. In this context access to financial and benefits advice which ensures that people receive their entitlements is crucial.
- 1.6. Many trans older people experience loneliness and isolation. Fear of crime and in particular hate crime or harassment on the grounds of gender identity is a major contributing factor in this. One way of combating isolation and loneliness can be through providing volunteering opportunities.

## 2. The older trans population

- 2.1. Under the Equality Act 2010 gender re-assignment is a protected characteristic and discrimination on this ground is prohibited. However official statistics on the trans population, including people who intermittently cross-dress, non-binary people and those who identify as the opposite sex to the one they were assigned at birth, are currently inadequate. This makes it difficult for public authorities, such as health authorities, to make appropriate provision for trans people as they do not have access to reliable information about the number of people having this characteristic in the relevant population. To address this data deficit the Equality and Diversity Forum of which Age UK is a member, has called for a question

being in their new gender. It is important that policy and practice take account of these diverse experiences among the older trans population.

2.4. With regard to specific health concerns and interventions this submission looks primarily at the situations of people who have permanently transitioned. With regard to social care, finances and participation in the community, as well as issues relating to dignity in all services, the issues we raise may apply equally to people with a range of trans identities, not just those who have permanently transitioned.

### **3. Access to gender reassignment treatment**

3.1. For many trans people, unhappiness in their birth gender is experienced from an early point in their lives. However an evidence review carried out on behalf of the Equality

- 4.2. Knowledge is improving as trans people age but there are still unanswered questions about what later life and health will be like for them. We are only now seeing the first generation of trans people in their 60s and over who have taken hormone therapy for 30 years or more. Individuals are living with gender reassignment surgeries performed using the very different techniques of the 1960s and 70s. More data needs to be collected and monitored to understand what it is like to have an older trans body.
- 4.3. Older trans people may face health issues relating to their birth gender which need to be handled sensitively by health professionals. An example of good practice in this regard could be a hospital offering a trans man the first appointment of the day for a hysterectomy. This would avoid him the embarrassment of being one man among many women in the waiting room. They could also make arrangements for him to have his details registered in a private area.
- 4.4. It is essential that older trans people have access to quality information about how to safeguard their own health. For example older trans men who have not had a hysterectomy will continue to require smear tests and even if they have had their breasts removed will still require breast cancer screening. It is important that health providers are aware of these needs so that they can ensure individuals receive reminders to attend screening.
- 4.5. Of course older trans people will not only face health issues relating to their gender identity, but also the same range of conditions experienced across the population as a whole. In seeking to access health services across the board there is a risk that older trans people face multiple discrimination as a result of their age, gender identity and possibly other characteristics, such as race, too. In accordance with the public sector Equality Duty public health authorities must take pre-emptive steps to prevent unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for all those with protected characteristics.
- 4.6. Older trans people who come into contact with health and care services are at increased risk of having their human right to a private life, which includes an emphasis on the importance of personal dignity and autonomy, breached if their privacy is not adequately protected. It is essential that doctors, nursing staff, social workers and care assistants working with older trans clients always obtain their permission before discussing their situation with other professionals in any way that might identify them as trans.
- 4.7. Undignified care can also result from a lack of trans awareness among staff. For example we are aware anecdotally of an instance in which a trans man needed a pair of slippers but the care home did not have any men's slippers available in the correct size so provided him instead with a pair of women's ones. While such an oversight might appear trivial in actual fact it caused the man great distress and contributed to the feeling that he was not being treated with dignity and respect for his gender identity.



6.3. Volunteering opportunities can be one way of combating isolation and loneliness. Age UK has a strong track record of offering volunteer positions to trans people, successfully including them in the workplace, often as an important part of their route through gender reassignment treatment.