

Briefing for MPs, 15th March 2024

Overview of the bill

The second reading of the Health and Equality Acts (Amendment) Bill (see bills.parliament.uk/bills/3560), a private member's bill (ballot bill) introduced by Liz Truss MP, is on the House of Commons agenda for the morning of **Friday 15th March**.

The provisions in the bill would do three things:

1. Make it an offence for any regulated health provider in the UK to prescribe, supply or administer puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones to under-18 year olds as a treatment for gender dysphoria or distress.
2. Require schools and other public authorities to use language that is truthful about the immutability of sex when speaking to, or about, children and recording information about them.
3. Amend the Equality Act (2010) to make it clear that the protected characteristic of sex relates to whether someone was born with a male or a female body.

Why the bill is important

Protecting children: healthcare There is insufficient evidence that hormonal treatment for children who are suffering from gender distress has positive clinical outcomes. On 12th March, NHS England announced that it will no longer prescribe puberty blockers to children. Parliament needs to go further, with legislation that ensures that no healthcare provider in the UK, including those in the private sector, is legally able to prescribe these experimental and dangerous treatments to under 18s anywhere in the UK.

Protecting children: schools The Government has issued draft guidance for schools on gender-questioning children, following calls from teachers and school leaders seeking direction on how to respond. However, because this guidance is not itself statutory, activist groups are currently able to undermine it, encouraging teachers to pretend to children that it is possible to change sex. This legislation would ensure that how children are treated in school, and how their data is recorded by public authorities (such as social services and the NHS) corresponds with their sex.

Protecting single-sex spaces and services Lack of clarity in the Equality Act (2010) on the meaning of "sex" is resulting in organisations that provide spaces, services and sports separately for women and men becoming uncertain about whether this is lawful. As a result they do not provide the clear rules that are needed to protect fairness, safety, security and dignity for women. The bill defines the protected characteristic of "sex" in relation to a person's sex chromosomes, naturally occurring sex hormones and the internal and external genitalia they are born with. This aligns with the well-established common-law definition of sex.

Transgender people continue to have protection against harassment and discrimination under the separate provisions for people with the protected characteristic "gender reassignment".

For more information contact Laura Pascal at Sex Matters: publicaffairs@sex-matters.org