

Dear Women's Organisations,

We are women survivors of systemic male violence in all its forms. As you probably know, 98% of sexual offences and 80% of violent crimes are committed by males against females and not the reverse. We have suffered every kind of horror inflicted on our bodies and minds. For many of us we are battling every day with trauma symptoms. Speaking out is not easy for us and we respectfully ask that you listen.

As you may be aware the government is considering changes to the Gender Recognition Act. See this fact sheet for more details:

<https://sages.org.uk/publications/sages-factsheet.html>.

We are extremely concerned about these proposed changes which will allow any biological male to easily self-identify as a woman and will take away our fundamental right to natal female spaces. This would make it very difficult for you to refuse any male in women's spaces even under the Equality Act exemptions. We are surprised that we, as survivors, are having to explain to you, women's organisations, why we don't want biological males in our spaces but we have no choice but to speak out in the face of a barrage of online verbal abuse, death threats and threats of male sexual torture.

For many of us, we are only alive today because of women only spaces. We know how vital it is for our healing and we fear for other women. Some of us fear for our lives without the support of women's services, which many of us will be unable to attend with a biological male presence there.

We disagree with these proposed changes. We would like to keep our spaces for females only and we ask that you oppose the changes to the Gender Recognition Act in the up and coming consultation for the following reasons:

**1. We object to being made invisible as survivors of male violence. We object to our needs being disregarded and made less of a priority than those of trans people**

We are being put second in the following ways:

**a. We are being forced to submit to the transgender activist world view that a woman is a feeling in someone's head, rather than a biological reality**

Please think about whether you honestly believe this and that women don't experience biology based oppressions? If you don't believe that woman is merely a feeling why are you validating this? Would you make a generic survivors group be from a Pagan or Muslim perspective to be inclusive of Pagan or Muslim women? If not why then make women and your whole service submit to a trans-activist world view? Pagan and Muslim women are not demanding this. No other oppressed group has demanded another group submit to their view of the world. Why is such a small

group being prioritised to the point where women must sacrifice their sex based human rights?

b. **We do not feel safe and mounting evidence shows we are not safe**

Women's Aid motto is "Until Women and Children are Safe". We do not feel safe having males in our spaces. If my rapist follows me you will ring 999. You will get the police to do safety checks on my welfare. If he comes near the refuge you will force me to leave there for my own safety and the safety of other women, yet if he puts on a dress and calls himself a woman you could welcome him into the refuge and call women bigots for objecting. Under the new law you may be forced to do this or at least you would find it very difficult to prevent.

For some of us, our perpetrators were trans, at the time of abuse or transitioned later after abusing us.

Please see the following evidence that women are not safe:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzwMJAFWLtQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAFcYTwn33A>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1722756661380462/>

Some of these predators are males who identify as women and others are just men posing as trans for the purpose of exploiting women. This will not matter under the reformed GRA as any of these males will have instant access through being able to declare themselves a woman at any point using a simple administrative procedure.

There is mounting evidence of males trying to transition for unscrupulous reasons. There is a report by a psychologist named K. Saunders in Oxford. She refused people transition because they are paedophiles who tried to gain female status. They expressed a belief that intimate contact with children would be more socially acceptable in a female role.

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-psychiatrist/article/gender-reassignment-5-years-of-referrals-in-oxfordshire/6B5F217162ABD9B3189F2EB82787034E/core-reader>

Also this evidence of an overwhelming number of sex offenders trying to transition to gain access to women prisons when compared to males in prison for other offences:

<https://fairplayforwomen.com/misgendering-double-rapist/>

<https://fairplayforwomen.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/19532.pdf>

<https://www1.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/BPS-response-HoCWE-Transgender-Equality-Approved.pdf> - see section 8

You can see here how checks by psychiatrists are vital in preventing rapists and paedophiles transitioning for sinister reasons. Under the proposed changes to the GRA we would lose all of these checks and transitioning would become a mere administrative process. No psychiatrists would be involved

We also want to draw attention to autogynephiles who are men who become sexually aroused by being seen as women. The changes to the GRA would allow these men to gain legal status as female and access women's spaces

<https://autogynephiliatruth.wordpress.com/2015/04/27/what-many-transgender-activists-dont-want-you-to-know-and-why-you-should-know-it-anyway/>

- c. **We are being treated as props. Female survivors are not props to validate the identities of trans people.**

We are human beings in our own right as females. We object to our own healing and needs being disregarded and amalgamated with trans rights when our needs are different. We did not have a choice about identifying as female, we simply are and have been abused and oppressed on that basis. No oppressed group has been able to identify their way out of slavery and torture and genocide so we object now that some members of an oppressor group (males) wants to identify their way into an oppressed group (females). As women's organisations most of you have a full understanding of patriarchy.

We are worried that biological males are demanding that females who are traumatised by them be present at the services they are accessing, rather than start their own groups.

d. **Suicides and Murders**

We are told we have to let biological males in our spaces because of the high number of trans suicides. However, 10 women a week commit suicide and 60,000 a year attempt it (Crime Survey England and Wales 2014). More women attempt suicide every year than there are trans people and in Mathy 2002b in a survey, it was found that lesbians have a higher suicide attempt rate than trans people. Southall Black Sisters also found a high rate of suicides for South Asian women and young women's suicides have doubled in the last ten years (Independent 2017)

There are also more women murdered every year than trans people murder and both of these are murdered predominantly by males. We ask why trans suicides and murders are being prioritised but yet again lethal and pandemic male violence against women and girls continues to be ignored. Could it be because murders of males by other males is, as always, deemed more important than murder of females by males? This speaks volumes about who has more power in society.

<https://kareningalasmith.com/2018/03/10/2018/>

This is a bigger threat to women as male-bodied trans people can access trans spaces as well as many women's spaces, but where will female survivors who are traumatised by males go for support?

e. **Why should male-bodied people's right be prioritised over the needs of pregnant women and women with nursing babies?**

Only females become pregnant and women's rights are synonymous with children's rights because of this. This is all made invisible by trans politics which seeks to deny biology. We count these women among our numbers. We ask that mothers, who make up an extremely high number of women, be prioritised over trans 'women'. This is why we must prioritise biology over identity.

- 2. We the undersigned object to being forced to further dissociate from our bodies and our feelings in order to accept a reality we do not agree with. We have freedom of speech and we do not agree that male bodied people are women and do not think we should be forced to pretend we agree.**

We are being told that we have to accept that male bodied are women and that we have to have male bodied people in our spaces. Trans identified male bodied people are fundamentally different to born women. This is a problem for us because, although we can pretend that we believe trans identifying males are women, to anyone who asks us, our bodies tell us different and we feel the same fear and panic and PTSD symptoms as when we are around ordinary biological males. This massively negatively impacts on our healing.

We all know that the history of rape and domestic violence stems from women being oppressed on the basis of their biological sex. When husbands could legally beat their wives in 1886, a woman was classed as an adult human female. When women were allowed to be paid less, a woman was classed as an adult human female. When women were allowed to be denied education, a woman was classed as an adult human female. Feminists had to campaign for decades to force men's institutions to change their women-hating policies but now all of a sudden when males decide they want to come into female only spaces woman is a mere identity.

Pretending we believe trans-identified males are women is not the answer and is in fact dangerous for many of us who have dissociated from our bodies and are only just learning to trust them again and our feelings in our body. To pretend we think trans identified males are women would require a huge amount of dissociation that would put our healing at risk, would violate our boundaries and quite frankly deny reality in a way that is completely insane on a scale of George Orwell 1984 proportions. Demanding women who have been subjected to male violence accept the lie that "this man is now a woman" violates women's material reality and reinforces the lies/ intimidations men inflict on women in order to dominate and control us.

This is especially dangerous for women who do not yet know how to have boundaries. To be forced to further dissociate by an organisation like Rape Crisis or Women's Aid is an absolute violation and goes against everything you stand for. To force women to accept males in their spaces fundamentally violates the central reason why these women only organisations were created and renders them meaningless. This is especially when you consider that 80-95% of males who transition keep their penises.

**3. We the undersigned cannot heal with males in our spaces and feel re-traumatised having males in our spaces. This effectively renders all women's services irrelevant. We may as well just have mixed services if any male can access women's services which they will be able to do under the proposed changes to the GRA.**

Women's services already recognise that women need female only space yet some of you are disregarding it or acting as though this is somehow different because a particular biological male identifies as transgender.

Some of the principles of healing from abuse are:

- Safety as a priority (physical and emotional)
- Avoiding re-traumatisation
- Learning about boundaries and gaining confidence to assert them
- Learning to trust our own judgement and instincts

These are used as standard practice across the board from group therapy, to one to one therapy, to support services for women yet for some reason they are being ignored. All of these are under threat having males in our spaces. We are shocked that we are having to ask women's organisations' why you are disregarding your own principles?

As survivors who are healing we know all too well the effects of trauma. Often around males, especially those who don't respect our boundaries, our bodies grow tense, shoulders stiffen, breathing quickens, and thoughts become cloudy. We fold in ourselves to try to make ourselves less visible, safe. It is well known from the work of trauma experts that in such a state of hyper- or hypo arousal, healing cannot take place and attempts at processing what has happened to us simply re-traumatizes us, taking us around in circles, which is why female only spaces are vital to us.

As we began to heal, we learnt, for the first time, that we have the right to say "No". We learnt what boundaries are. We learnt to begin reconnecting with and listening to our

bodies again. We began to make sense of all the psychological tactics that had kept us trapped. And now, many people want to tell us, once more, that we should ignore what our eyes, ears and bodies tell us, squash down our instinctive warning cries, dissolve our boundaries, and accept that a man is a woman because he says he is and we are asked to welcome him within our sacred circle, in all the places we are most vulnerable, when we are fleeing from domestic abuse, imprisoned, pregnant, having intimate examinations, changing or sleeping.

We are told that if we feel re-traumatised or refuse to accept this, that is because we are transphobic, and that this person's suffering, brought by the presence of his alleged "feminine brain" and his desire to wear the trappings of gendered womanhood from which we could not escape, is far greater than ours. The problem is ours and we should learn to get over it. And so we are gaslit, guilt-tripped, and manipulated again into putting our own needs aside and caring for a man who demonstrates his ability to cross our boundaries.

And we should still be able to heal our wounded bodies and fragmented minds under these circumstances.

Really?

Women's Aid clearly states on page 24 of their Power to Change manual that some survivors of male violence will not feel safe in groups with males; will not be able to talk honestly and freely in front of males. Yet no one is talking about what effect having males who identify as females will have on women. This is being treated like it is a non-issue.

Rape Crisis clearly state in their evidence based best practice model that survivors need to be 'safe and secure and have their dignity explicitly recognised', that we need to be validated that our 'responses to trauma need to be validated as normal - not sick or maladaptive.' Yet if we are not even allowed to say we are traumatised by having biological males in our spaces how can this best practice model be adhered to?

#### **4. The exemptions in the Equality Act will be unworkable under the proposed changes to the GRA.**

The government says we will retain our sex based protections under the Equality Act but we feel this will be unworkable if the Equality Act is undermined and changed by the back door because the legal definition of sex will have been made ambiguous. How can we have sex based protections with no real definition of sex?

It is already very difficult for women's organisations to apply these exemptions. How much more difficult will it be if we lose the scrutiny of medical professionals - GP's, psychiatrists etc. How will we prevent predatory males accessing women's spaces when we firstly have no access to their records to know if they are a rapist. Secondly are not allowed to ask if they are trans and thirdly even if we know they are trans are not able to prove this because under the GRA their birth certificate will now say female. How can services refuse any male on this basis and if you do you could be subject to endless legal challenges draining time, energy and resources. We also worry the onus will be put into vulnerable women to say they don't want trans people in their spaces. Please see this article for more info on how the exemptions will be unworkable:

[https://fairplayforwomen.com/gov\\_response/](https://fairplayforwomen.com/gov_response/)

We ask that you support us by doing the following:

1. Speak out against the proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act in the recently released government consultation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reform-of-the-gender-recognition-act-2004>

In particular against self-identification.

2. Read the information on the following websites about how the proposed changes will genuinely affect women before submitting your consultation response:

<https://fairplayforwomen.com/>

<https://womansplaceuk.org/>

<https://sages.org.uk/>

<https://www.mayday4women.com/>

3. Use the exemptions in the Equalities Act and ask for them to be extended so they are effective. We are shocked, as survivors, that more of you haven't already been using these. The exemptions are legal and have been written in

to the act *because* of females' innate vulnerability. They are designed to be used. Please see this document for more info:

[https://notwhotheysayiam.wordpress.com/2016/06/17/a-uk-guide-for-non-lawyers-about-protecting-women-only-spaces-june-2016/amp/?\\_\\_twitter\\_impression=true](https://notwhotheysayiam.wordpress.com/2016/06/17/a-uk-guide-for-non-lawyers-about-protecting-women-only-spaces-june-2016/amp/?__twitter_impression=true)

4. Don't be afraid to stand up for women. Many of us are vulnerable women yet we have been able to stand up in the face of death threats, we ask that you have the courage to join us.
5. Don't allow yourselves to be bribed by funding. All the funding in the world will not be effective if we lose our women only spaces.
6. Make other arrangements for trans people or ask that trans people have their own services. If the trans community wish to lobby for their own services, as women historically had to, we believe that women would stand side by side with them to support this.

Here is evidence of women already being affected. If self-ID passes these incidences will only increase

[http://abc30.com/amp/homeless-women-harassed-in-shower-lawsuit-says/3514544/?\\_\\_twitter\\_impression=true](http://abc30.com/amp/homeless-women-harassed-in-shower-lawsuit-says/3514544/?__twitter_impression=true)

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/terrified-patient-treated-like-transphobic-bigot-bsfsgrv2p>

<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/02/when-i-was-raped-it-was-female-only-spaces-helped-me-recover>

<https://radlesfemsurvivor.wordpress.com/>

<https://www.socfem.net/2017/11/equality-act-2010>

[https://www.mumsnet.com/Talk/womens\\_rights/3296831-Can-we-talk-about-the-mental-impact-of-being-told-the-definition-of-woman-is-changing#add\\_message](https://www.mumsnet.com/Talk/womens_rights/3296831-Can-we-talk-about-the-mental-impact-of-being-told-the-definition-of-woman-is-changing#add_message)

We know people are scared to speak out and challenge this but it is vital that you do so. It will be much harder to get our rights back if we lose them. Do you really want to be wasting your resources to fight this in ten years' time once you have had a string of abusive males in your refuges and a mounting number of traumatised women and children who will never trust a women's refuge again? We would like to end with a quote from Audre Lorde:

## 'Your silence will not protect you'

Here are some quotes and blogs from survivors

Survivors quotes:

Twenty years on from the physical and sexual abuse I suffered, I am happily married to a gentle and kind man. However, I am still very nervous and jumpy around men I do not know and feel afraid if I am in situations where I feel vulnerable with unknown males around. Female only spaces are incredibly important to me and I place huge value on them as they are spaces in which I can feel safe and know that I will not encounter anyone with a male body. I am incredibly distressed by the idea that I and other women like me may be about to lose those spaces, and the idea that people with an agenda are dismissing my fears as irrational and weaponising it as transphobia just adds to that. Please keep women only spaces for natal women, they are so important.

Caroline C

My father used to dress up in my mum's clothes and a mask to abuse me. It's essential for me to have women only space and I'm very pleased that you are putting this letter together.  
Emma Campbell

I am a survivor of an abusive Lesbian relationship. I did not know about refuges at the time and did not use one. I understand that women's refuges are considering having men who say they are women as staff and also to come into refuges if they need to. I do not consider these men to be women. If I was in that situation again and the refuge had male staff or men coming into refuge I would not consider this a safe space for me and would not use the refuge. There is an exemption under the Equalities Act for these kind of situations and I am shocked that women's refuges are not using it.

D.S

Hi, I can leave an anonymous quote about how after I was physically assaulted (by a man I didn't suspect would attack me) I felt alert, vigilant and distrustful in potential male company and only felt more relaxed comfortable and at ease in the absence of male company, My attackers genitals and my sexual parts were involved in a bodily attack, he didn't care about my identity and at that point I didn't care about his! This means that I focused on potential hazards and threats (risks from males) and struggled to concentrate attentively on other things when I was on my guard. I felt if men discovered my vulnerability it would increase my fear /decrease my safety. This was very draining. I got support from an Idva and 'grounding sessions' from women, who I felt had more understanding not just of the attack but its context. The fear of physical contact with men has reduced so it doesn't inhibit my day as much but would I have reached this point if there were more mixed spaces? I didn't want to go to a mixed meditation class (where I had my eyes shut) so it would have been a barrier.

Anon

I reflect on my life, on my experience of living as a woman. I try to understand what being a woman means to me. What is particular to my experience of being a female human being rather than a male one?

Do I identify as a woman? Is it a choice? Did I ever choose to be a woman? And the answer is clear. No. It was never a choice. On that autumn night long ago in the early 1950s, the midwife took one look at my external genitals and that was that. I was a girl. An immature female person. Who would grow into a woman, an adult female person. Whether I liked it or not. And by the way, the midwife did not "assign me female". No. She recognised me for what I was – a baby female human being. A baby girl.

And that's how I was treated. As a girl. Whether I liked it or not. And I didn't like it. Not at all. As a little girl, I longed and longed to be a boy. Because I could see that boys have more freedom. Boys are taken seriously. Boys are safer. Boys aren't afraid all the time. All of that was completely clear to my 5, 6, 7-year old eyes. But I was a girl. I couldn't change that and I was afraid.

My father sexually abused me. Because I was a girl. "I hurt you, rip you open and make you bleed because you are bad. You are cunt. You are whore. You are a tease." In this way I learnt that I deserved my own abuse. And this assured my silence. Because to speak of it would be to reveal that I deserved it. That it was all I was good for. So I was silent. And in the daytime world, he ridiculed me, like he ridiculed my mother. And when he ridiculed her, he ridiculed me because I knew that I was growing up in her image and not in his. As girl. As future woman.

Anna Djinn

I am so angry I am even having to write this. Just yesterday I was researching suicide methods. This is how severely traumatised I am by my abuse. I can barely function. I cannot even make meals for myself and have to have carers. I should be accessing healing women's spaces but they are all disappearing. Instead of getting help even in this state of severe trauma I have no choice but to spend my time writing this. I have a severe headache just from even being at my computer. This is life and death for me. If there are no longer women's spaces where I feel safe because trans are allowed in them it will be impossible for me to heal. It is hard enough even with the women's spaces. Stop ignoring abuse survivors and our voices. We need safe spaces and spaces with trans-identified males in them are not safe. I was sexually harassed by a self-confessed trans woman who was sending me pictures of himself in female underwear yet you expect me to feel safe in a women's space with this person to heal from abuse are you for real? To any so called feminist supporting trans politics so you can get funding or because it is conducive to your career or your bank balance – shame on you – you are on the wrong side of history – stop ignoring our voices

Anon survivor

Coming from child sexual abuse and trauma by men and I would feel so at risk if I had to be near trans identified males.

Anon

The first time I was raped was by a new boyfriend. We had arranged to meet in a pub near my house and he (deliberately in retrospect) drank too much to drive home and I felt unkind making him get public transport so I allowed him to stay. I made it very clear I didn't want sex and we went to sleep clothed. I woke up to find him raping me. I screamed at him to stop and he did. This doesn't sound like a really big deal I know. But on Monday, I got on the bus and the crowds of people made me have a panic attack. I had to get off. I couldn't go to work for a month because I couldn't bear to have anyone within a foot of me. I couldn't stop crying. I couldn't bear anyone looking at me or talking to me or interacting with me in any way. I lost my trust in all men. I am still frightened of all men. I have never knowingly been on my own with a man unless I know him very very well since that night 20 years ago. If unknown men are going to be in toilets and changing rooms, I will not be able to use them. I deserve to have access to toilets and changing rooms as a rape survivor and my rights to facilities should not be less important than those of a man who identifies as a woman.

Thank you.

Sarah

I oppose the notion of trans-identified males in female only spaces. I have experienced habitual male sexual violence since the age of 5, when I was supposed to be at school and

protected. I've been raped in a public toilet. Raped by my now ex-husband, who enjoyed to rape me whilst he wore my clothing. And finally, in November of last year, I was gang raped in my village, pissed on and spat on as they assured themselves that it was fine because I'm a "crack head." I'm a mother who dared to walk to the shop for a pint of milk.

Every romantic relationship I have been in has been violent, to some degree. From run of the mill pushing and barging to locking me in the house and attempting to kill us both in a house fire. My situation is not isolated. There are thousands upon thousands of women who have been left permanently traumatised by male violence.

I would ask you to consider why women are oppressed by men. Why they are the object of so much sexual and physical violence. Because it is NOT because we identify as women. The oppression of women is the oppression of a class with shared biological characteristics. We are oppressed with sexual violence because women have vaginas. We are oppressed with domestic violence because biologically, men are physically stronger than women. And men learn to oppress women socially. It isn't something they are born with a desire to carry out... they are taught by their parents, their peers, their idols, that dominating women is an acceptable - even desirable - behaviour.

Transwomen are socialised as males. They are taught misogyny in the same way that other men are, and the idea that they can escape that socialisation is as ridiculous as the idea that there is a man on this earth who is not, in some way, sexist without intention. Privilege is being blind to the things that do not affect you, or pertain to you, in any way.

No, I do not trust transwomen not to assault women. But even if I did, does it matter? I will never trust men, and the proposed changes to the legislation surrounding gender identity will make it easier for men to infiltrate safe spaces for women as women. I'm told that this is not a concern that I should worry about, but how many times have we seen violent men in prisons attempt to identify as women so that they may be transferred to female prisons? It is not a new concept to posit that men pose a threat to female people. It is entirely rational for women to be afraid of males in spaces that are supposed to be safe. And whether or not people are inclined to agree with it that includes natal males who now identify as women.

I will not apologise for the fear I feel as a consequence of male behaviour. That is not my burden to bear.

D.H.

<https://madamnomad.com/2018/04/06/tranz-encounters-of-the-weird-kind/comment-page-1/#comment-407>

This is my response to how the last remaining services for women only could disappear due to the transgender issue.

I am a woman who comes from a background of domestic violence as a child. Developed an intense fear of men. I am from the 60's – between the 80s and 2000 there have been women's groups to go to that were supportive and helped me with social skills and company. Slowly due to cut backs I have been unable to access such support in group activities and advice due to the groups amalgamating with men. I am severely male phobic due to the severity of the abuse I suffered. Any sight of a male, Finding out a person who I thought was a woman is a man causes me some distress and confusion

Transgender is a new situation for us women to get to grips with and it does feel so unfair of those men who feel they are women to at such a short space of time be fully accepted into every women's space. If all male institutes feel they have the right to protect their need to keep women out surely women born women have the right to protect their space too. Men can set up their own refuges/ groups/ and the transgender situation need to consider their own group and allow the time and space women born women need. Domestic violence on women is so raw – men, whether truly men or transing – need to understand why women need their own space and think about setting up their situation for those who don't mind instead of criminalising women who don't feel safe or comfortable in situations which include men.

Anon

I'm going to speak about my experience of being partnered with a man who would claim that he was a woman.

If oppressed people (and women are a class of oppressed people) cannot define who they are the those people are unable to determine for themselves and form their own struggle....to determine which words we can and can't use to describe ourselves and our bodies and experience of living in these bodies in my view is a profound assault on women's human rights.

The man that I am talking about doesn't live full time as a woman and never did. He inhabits his persona during the day as a white privileged male and the woman comes out at the weekends....It is very much a fetish.... In his personal ad he is looking for a dominant lesbian to fulfil his need to be feminised and that he is willing to be ...punished... and live as a sex slave. Men like that do actually fall under the trans umbrella. ....He is protected under the law for his fetish. He can go into ladies toilets everywhere he once but this time he is a fetishist who is protected under the trans umbrella.

This relationship was psychologically, physically and financially abusive....it completely destroyed my soul and I became a shell of myself. When my friend asked me how I am doing I said: I'm just waiting to die....the last thing I needed was to be called bigoted by services so I told no one how I was suffering.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jV2NP0paCZ8&feature=youtu.be>

Jackie Mearns

I was raped as a child and again as an adult. It has affected every single part of my life. Every relationship. Most of them were abusive because my sense of self was so destroyed, that I thought I was worth nothing. Women's Aid gave me the strength to leave my abuser and save my children and myself. But even now, I am terrified around strange men. If I even find myself alone in a lift with a strange man, I have to get out because I can feel an anxiety attack starting. It is an in-built biological reaction to years of rape and abuse. If a male bodied person was in a shelter or a rape crisis group with me, I would be compelled to leave. I would suffer panic attacks and be entirely unable to manage. I would no longer feel safe. My need for female only spaces is hardwired into me as a result of the abuse I suffered. Pretending that traumatised women can't tell the difference between male and female bodied people, is gas lighting on a massive scale. Asking us to deny the effects of our trauma, to override all those dreadful feelings destroying us from the inside out, in order to be kind and inclusive, is, I'm afraid, simply wrong.

Jane Galloway

As a lesbian the first time I went to a lesbian bar I was harassed by a man in women's clothing all night telling me I am not a lesbian. This was when I was first questioning my sexuality and was feeling very confused and scared and vulnerable. This was the last thing I needed as I went there to meet other women. Then I tried to access a group for women coming out as lesbians and it was stopped because of a trans identifying male accessing it which caused a huge divide between the women accessing it. There was a huge conflict. Some of the women did not feel comfortable and it resulted in the group being shut down. The same thing happened to a women's festival I used to attend which was the only thing that stopped me feeling suicidal as I am unwell and stuck at home all the time. It took me years to arrange disabled access and finally be able to attend and helped me to manage my mental health as I had something to look forward to where I could feel safe and happy. However, it got shut down because of males identifying as females trying to attend an acting in ways that made women feel unsafe.

LR

Quotes from Professionals

What an appalling affront to women's rights and to the brave and brilliant women who worked so hard to create the women's refuge movement. I wonder if the idiots cheerleading this possible move have the slightest understanding of how completely traumatised most women and children in refuges are. How important it is to them to have a safe haven where they won't encounter any males. Adult sons are not even allowed to visit their mothers in refuge. These are wonderful safe places that are for women to recover and

heal. The presence of a male, however said male identifies, could be enough to trigger a woman into leaving refuge and going back to her abuser. And most decent transwomen - and they are the majority - would understand how triggering their presence could be and would not take a job in a refuge. Which leaves those with less than honourable reasons, plus males who can ID as female to access vulnerable women including their ex partners. But who cares about women, trans rights come first!

Caroline R – worked for Women’s Aid

When working in a women’s refuges I worked with women who were terrified that their cross dressing partners would follow them into the refuge

LR

I am very concerned about Women’s Aid refuges admitting men who say they are women either as users of the refuge service or as staff. Having been both a Women’s Aid Advice worker and a refuge worker I would be very unhappy in either case. Women's refuges are by definition a place of sanctuary. Women coming to refuge are expecting a female only environment both in terms of staff and other refuge users. I believe it will seriously affect whether a woman will stay on in the refuge if there are men there who are saying they are women.

D.S

I have previously worked in, and run, refuges for Women's Aid. The idea of any male who identifies as a woman having access scares me. People such as Maria Miller speak of the assessment process to access refuge and how this would weed out potential abusers. Firstly, this is ridiculous because it is impossible to tell someone's intentions and many abusers are good at putting on a front (it's the same logic that says that women should automatically know who is a rapist and who isn't). Secondly, I think people who believe this have no idea how basic the assessment to actually enter the refuge can be, especially if out of hours. The over-the-phone assessment done at weekends or in the night is incredibly basic (a handful of questions) and also relies on the person replying honestly and we did not meet the person before they turned up to the refuge (a taxi would be called for them). In this situation a male could arrive on the doorstep of a house staffed by one female worker at three in the morning, with abused women and children in bed, and with hardly any assessment of any kind. Incidentally, in my place of work it was all lone working - having males who merely 'identify' as women but are clearly embodied men and socialised men could make that situation particularly difficult. Thirdly, a great many of the women I supported had not just been abused by one man but a succession of men, sometimes from childhood (including sexual abuse by family members) - they are entitled to feel safe in a refuge, which should be the one place in the world at that point that they can be assured

that no men will be present - this applies also to the children who may very likely have been traumatised by witnessing male violence. I am not against individual trans women who have, for example, transitioned and may be perceived as female by staff and residents accessing (if this were to occur), but the idea that any embodied male can enter a shared house of abused women, which (and I think again many people don't know this) are mostly unstaffed at evenings/nights/weekends, is horrifying, and I think speaks to a general ignorance about the emotional and psychological effects of male abuse, a distorted perception of the gendered (as in male/female) nature of violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence, and a widespread ignorance about how refuges are actually run.

Anonymous refuge worker – worked for a large city based org with multiple refuges

In 6 years of working in womens' refuges (Decades ago) we only once enlisted a man to come on a childcare outing, it was successful, he was het, quite atypical of the average male being the oldest of 9 kids. We never did it again cos the Mothers were anxious that retraumatising situations could happen. We had been lucky that time. We workers agreed. I personally feel sick at the thought of trans identified males being allowed near in any way or to enter a Women's and children's Refuge. It is not protecting Women's and children's needs. Since when do we allow Women's' Safety to suffer to appease Peoples' Identity issues.

Janey Kelf

I volunteered at a WA refuge in the 80s. If a man came to the door and he wasn't a plumber we would phone the police. Now we're expected to invite them in if they're mentally ill or fetishists and house them with vulnerable women. The women I knew then, mostly working class and with kids were working really hard to rebuild their lives and would have been horrified if a TIM had been allowed in. They also would have torn him a new one. They were fierce, a lot of them.

Ali Bee