

GENDER RECOGNITION ACT 2004

LGBTQ+ HISTORY MONTH



The Gender Recognition Act 2004 was a law passed by the UK government that gives people with gender dysphoria legal recognition as the sex most appropriate to their gender identity. This that means legal documents such as passports can be changed to reflect a person's true identity.

Until 2004, people whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth had to live with their official documents not recognising their true identity. For many, this caused heightened gender dysphoria, made people to feel as if their identity was not valid and caused humiliation among many other things.



WHAT STILL NEEDS TO CHANGE?

Although this act was a landmark change, there is still no legal recognition of people who do not identify as 'male' or 'female'. The law still requires a medical diagnosis of 'gender dysphoria' and that the person who wishes to change their legal documents has lived in their 'acquired gender' for at least 2 years. There are calls for this to be changed as it perpetuates outdated and harmful stereotypes.

HOW DID THE LAW COME TO BE PASSED?

In 1951, Roberta Cowell made history as the first known British woman to have undergone gender-reassignment surgery.

Since then, public understanding and knowledge about transgender people has grown considerably.

However, in 1970, the legal case *Corbett v Corbett* decided that a person's sex cannot be legally changed. This meant that trans people continued to be denied a legal identity.

In 2002, the case of *Goodwin v United Kingdom* ruled that UK law denied trans people many human rights, requiring the Gender Recognition Act to be introduced.