



GENDER IDEOLOGY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE SEX-BASED RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

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Introduction

1. Merched Cymru is a grassroots group of women from across Wales working to protect and promote the rights of women and girls. We include all women regardless of age, race, faith or sexual orientation. We are not aligned to any political party.
2. Our campaigns relate to the fact that women and girls are oppressed and discriminated against on the basis of their biological sex. Being female has an impact on every aspect of our lives and it is not possible to identify out of that reality.

Gender ideology

3. In a Written Statement (July 2020), the Welsh Government said: “We restate our support for trans people’s right to self-identification. We believe trans women are women, trans men are men and non-binary identities are valid”. This assertion is at the heart of gender ideology: the idea that people can self-identify as men or women, regardless of their biological sex, and should be accepted as such without exception.
4. Gender identity is an entirely subjective and highly contested concept which relies on outdated, sexist stereotypes of ‘appropriate’ interests and behaviours. In children, boys who like wearing dresses or playing with dolls are encouraged to consider that they might actually be girls. It is suggested to girls who like football and climbing trees that they could really be boys. This concept is often described as ‘being born in the wrong body’ or there being a mismatch between one’s body and brain. There is no scientific evidence supporting this idea, despite claims to the contrary.
5. If a child does decide that their ‘gender identity’ is at odds with their biological sex, teachers, parents, and health professionals are advised by charities such as Stonewall and Mermaids to affirm the child’s self-diagnosis without question. They are not encouraged to explore the many reasons why a child might want to disassociate from their sexed body or the high correlation with co-morbidities such as self-harm, anorexia, depression, autism, trauma and sexual abuse.
6. People presenting with discomfort in their sexed body may be diagnosed with Gender Dysphoria. The diagnostic criteria for Gender Dysphoria are also based on social and cultural stereotypes. It should be noted that people do not have to have a diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria to claim a status of ‘transgender’.
7. The concept of a ‘gender identity’ which is separate to (and takes precedence over) a person’s biological sex, is completely opposed to the biological reality that sex is binary and immutable, and the social reality that women and girls face violence and discrimination because of their sex, not their sense of identity.

Medicalisation of children

8. A direct result of this ideology can be seen in the startling rise in the number of children, particularly girls, being referred to the Tavistock & Portman Gender Identity Development Service

(GIDS) - an increase of 4,400 per cent over eight years. Most children referred to GIDS are prescribed puberty blockers, the stated aim of which is to offer the child 'time to decide'. A Health Research Authority investigation into a GIDS early intervention study, however, suggested that puberty blockers were in effect the first step for most patients towards further medical intervention in the form of cross-sex hormones.

9. Cross-sex hormones have serious lifelong effects which cannot be reversed if treatment is discontinued. If a child takes puberty blockers at Tanner stage 2 of puberty followed by cross-sex hormones at age 16 they will be sterilised as gametes have not developed. Virtually all children who take puberty blockers go on to take cross-sex hormones.
10. In addition to drug treatments, many young people also seek surgical interventions. Young women use fundraising websites to pay for voluntary double mastectomies (known as 'top surgery'). There are currently nearly 40,000 search results for 'top surgery' on GoFundMe, and 238,000 posts relating to #topsurgery on Instagram. This has all the hallmarks of a social contagion.

The legal context

11. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) includes sex as one of the nine protected characteristics. This makes discrimination on the basis of sex illegal.
12. The Act also establishes the concept of sex-based exemptions which allow for single-sex spaces, services and opportunities provided this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. An example of a legitimate aim would be considerations of privacy or decency which may require the provision of single sex public changing room or toilets, or the decision to allow female-only sports with the aim of ensuring safety and equity of opportunity.
13. However, sex-based exemptions are not obligatory. They can be ignored even if doing so is detrimental to the safety, dignity, or privacy of women and girls.
14. Stonewall and other trans-advocacy organisations have campaigned to end sex-based exemptions. They are pushing to open up all single-sex provision to anyone who identifies as a woman, whether or not they are taking hormones or have had surgery (it is estimated that over 90% of men who identify as women retain their male genitalia). As set out in their Written Statement, the Welsh Government supports gender self-identification. This would, by default, end to single-sex provision.
15. Stonewall guidance is ambiguous and has led to considerable confusion. Some organisations think that single-sex services are no longer legal; some assume that decisions about who can access female spaces and services are based on their 'gender expression' i.e. clothes, hair and make-up; others that a person's stated 'gender identity' is the deciding factor.
16. The impact is already being felt, even in situations where women are at their most vulnerable, such as hospital wards, prisons and refuges.
17. Single-sex spaces and services are essential to ensure the safety, privacy and dignity of women and girls, and to ensure their full participation in civic and cultural life.

Further Reading

Merched Cymru: [Why we campaign for single-sex facilities.](#)

Sex Matters: <https://sex-matters.org/posts/category/publications/>

Fair Play for Women: <https://fairplayforwomen.com/using-the-law-to-protect-sex-based-rights/>