

British LGBT activists criticise Minister for Women over trans comments

Saturday 22 September 2018, by [BUSBY Mattha](#) (Date first published: 27 August 2018).

Victoria Atkins said she is 'a little cautious' about use of gender reassignment

The minister for women has been condemned by transgender campaigners for saying that young people are having their gender reassigned as “an answer to questions they are perhaps not asking themselves”.

Victoria Atkins cited an increase in the number of teenagers who were being referred to undergo gender reassignment surgery and declared: “We need to get down to the reasons why this is happening.”

The remarks provoked criticism from leading [LGBT rights](#) activists who said it was “damaging to imply that trans teens are being given treatment lightly”.

The Conservative MP made her comments in an interview with the Daily Telegraph, in which she said: “I read in the paper recently that there has been a large increase in the number of teenagers who are identifying as [trans], and I think we need to get down to the reasons why this is happening.

“It may simply be a case of greater awareness, it may be that for some they see it as an answer to questions they are perhaps not asking themselves. We need to be particularly alert to this with regard to young people.

“The treatments are so serious and life-changing. I’m a little cautious of the use of those treatments because of the potential for the rest of their lives.

“Lots of questions are rightly being asked about how we treat young people. People whose bodies perhaps haven’t developed yet.”

Fox Fisher, a patron of the [LGBT+ helpline](#), said: “The women’s minister’s concerns need to be put into perspective and she needs to look into the actual reality of treatment given to trans people, and she needs to consult with trans organisations and people that work on the ground.

“It is damaging to imply that trans teens are being given treatment lightly, as behind it are decades of research and best practice. Trans people’s lives are at stake here, and we know what we need.”

Transgender young people remain very rare, despite the current media obsession with their existence

James Morton, Scottish Trans Alliance

James Morton, the [Scottish Trans Alliance](#) manager, said the number of transgender young people was very small and there was an “obsession with their existence” within sections of the media.

“There’s around 3.5 million young people currently going through puberty in the UK, with only around 300 gender dysphoric teenagers (less than 0.01%) starting reversible puberty delaying medication this year,” he said.

“Transgender young people remain very rare, despite the current media obsession with their existence. The NHS requires people to be adults before they can get any irreversible gender reassignment treatment.

“As Victoria Atkins explores this topic in more depth, I’m confident that she will see through the anti-trans campaigners’ scaremongering and be reassured that the [NHS assistance trans youth](#) receive is actually very carefully provided and safe.”

Figures released by the [Tavistock Clinic](#), the UK’s main centre specialising in gender issues, show that [2,519 referrals](#) for its young persons’ gender identity development service were received during 2017/18, around a quarter more than the previous year which had 2,016 referrals.

At the time that the figures were disclosed, Dr Polly Carmichael, gender identity development service director at the clinic’s Gender Identity Development Service, said there was “no single explanation for the increase in referral figures”, adding: “There has been significant progress towards the acceptance and recognition of transgender and gender diverse people in our society.

“There is also greater public knowledge about specialist gender clinics and the pathways into them, and an increased awareness of the possibilities around physical treatments for younger adolescents.”

[Owl Fisher](#), an advisor to All About Trans - an organisation looking to improve understanding of trans people - said treatment for trans teens is “incredibly effective” and that the real concern should be that [“up to 45% of trans youth are attempting suicide”](#).

They said: “Why isn’t there a public outcry over the fact that a vulnerable group of children are suffering because we as a society are failing to give them the support that they need?”

Mattha Busby

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The Guardian

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