

Press release: Government calls for evidence on people who have Variations in Sex Characteristics

Variations in sex characteristics (VSC), sometimes referred to as 'intersex' or 'differences in sex development', is an umbrella term used to describe physical sex development which differs from what is generally expected of males or females. These variations are present from birth and may be chromosomal, gonadal, anatomical or hormonal.

Depending on the individual case, these differences may be visible at birth or untraceable until puberty, or even later in life. Research from clinical experts suggests the 'number of people born with atypical genitalia may be as high as 1 in 300 births, but the birth prevalence of a condition that may lead to true genital ambiguity on expert examination may be as low as 1 in 5000 births.'

The [call for evidence](#) is designed for VSC individuals, their parents, carers, and legal guardians, and professionals and service providers to share their views and experiences on:

- Terminology – the terms people prefer using to describe having variations in sex characteristics
- Healthcare – how decisions are made around medical interventions and how healthcare services could be improved
- Education – how people with variations in sex characteristics experience school and how the education system could be improved
- Support services – what support, if any, affected individuals and their families receive and how support services could be improved
- Issues faced in day to day life – people's experiences of being in the workplace, of claiming benefits and using sport and leisure services
- Sex assignment, birth registration and correcting birth certificates – whether people have changed their birth certificate if the sex was incorrectly assigned at birth and parent's experiences of registering a child's birth
- Any other issues they have faced and want to raise

The Government Equalities Office has heard from people who had poor experiences when using the healthcare system 20-40 years ago. This included people who struggled to access their medical records and people who did not have access to a psychologist. Reflecting on their experiences, they reported that a psychologist could have helped them make informed decisions about the medical interventions they had undergone at the time.

Some young people have also had to take regular time off from school to attend medical appointments, are unable to fully participate in school activities and require psychosocial support to understand how and why their bodies develop differently to their peers.

Minister for Equalities Baroness Williams said:

"It is concerning to think that people in the UK may be afraid to visit the doctor or feel unable to take part at school because they are not receiving the support they need or deserve.

"Everyone in this country has a right to an education, healthcare and to go about their daily life without intrusion or fear of humiliation.

"This call for evidence is a chance for us to learn more about people's everyday lives, and I look forward to hearing more about their experiences."

Kaz Williams, adult support co-ordinator at UK Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia Support Group, said:

"The UK CAH Support Group is happy to be working with the Government Equalities Office on the Variations in Sex Characteristics call for evidence. We believe this is a positive step forward towards the Government gaining greater understanding and insight into the experiences and needs of children, young people and adults living with a variation in sex characteristics and their families."

Ellie Magritte, founder of dsdfamilies:

"We at dsdfamilies are delighted that the GEO want to hear directly from young people (aged 16+) and their families about the impact of having different sex development. We are impressed and encouraged by the breadth of topics covered in this call for evidence. Our recent consultations with children and families highlighted their needs relating to support and information, as well as for improvements in levels of understanding throughout health care and wider society. As this is the first time the Government has looked at these issues, we hope this call for evidence will lead to actual changes for children and families and we encourage people to respond."

Valentino Vecchietti, academic and campaigner:

"As a leading figure in the UK intersex movement, I welcome the UK Government's call for evidence. It is much needed, and I fully support their intention to seek a greater understanding of the experiences and needs of our varied community."

The call for evidence will run for 10 weeks from 17 Jan to 28 March 2019 and is open to anyone to respond. The government is working closely with support and advocacy organisations, campaigners, academics and clinicians to raise awareness and understand people's experiences.

Notes to editors:

The call for evidence can be found [here](#).

Anyone can respond to the call for evidence.

Population stats – Ahmed, S. F. et al. (2016) Society for Endocrinology UK guidance on the initial evaluation of an infant or an adolescent with a suspected disorder of sex development. Ahmed, S.F., Dobbie, R., Finlayson, A.R. et al. (2004) Regional & temporal variation in the occurrence of genital anomalies amongst singleton births, 1988–1997 Scotland. Archives of Disease Childhood, 89, F149–F151. Thyen, U., Lanz, K., Holterhus, P.M. et al. (2006) Epidemiology and initial management of ambiguous genitalia at birth in Germany. Hormone Research, 66, 195–203.

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Today (17 January 2019) the Government Equalities Office is launching a call for evidence on the experiences of people who have variations in sex characteristics.

Speech: PM's statement at Downing Street: 16 January 2019

This evening the Government has won the confidence of Parliament.

This now gives us all the opportunity to focus on finding a way forward on Brexit.

I understand that to people getting on with their lives, away from Westminster, the events of the past 24 hours will have been unsettling.

Overwhelmingly, the British people want us to get on with delivering Brexit, and also address the other important issues they care about.

But the deal which I have worked to agree with the European Union was rejected by MPs, and by a large margin.

I believe it is my duty to deliver on the British people's instruction to leave the European Union. And I intend to do so.

So now MPs have made clear what they don't want, we must all work constructively together to set out what Parliament does want.

That's why I am inviting MPs from all parties to come together to find a way forward.

One that both delivers on the referendum and can command the support of Parliament.

This is now the time to put self-interest aside.

I have just held constructive meetings with the leader of the Liberal Democrats, and the Westminster leaders of the SNP and Plaid Cymru.

From tomorrow, meetings will be taking place between senior Government representatives, including myself, and groups of MPs who represent the widest possible range of views from across Parliament – including our confidence and supply partners the Democratic Unionist Party.

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It will not be an easy task, but MPs know they have a duty to act in the national interest, reach a consensus and get this done.

In a historic vote in 2016 the country decided to leave the EU.

In 2017 80% of people voted for Parties that stood on manifestos promising to respect that result.

Now, over two and a half years later, it's time for us to come together, put the national interest first – and deliver on the referendum.

Speech: Rapid progress on peace agreement in Mali

Thank you Mr President.

Let me also thank Assistant Secretary-General Keita for her briefing and wish her well in her new role, since it's the first time since I've seen her in her new role. And I also welcome the presence of Her Excellency Foreign Minister Camara and welcome her to the Council.

Mr President, I will focus largely on the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in my statement.

2018 saw renewed commitments by the Government of Mali and the signatory armed groups to the expedited and full implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. In March, we saw the parties commit to a roadmap for the implementation of priority actions and in October, the Pact for Peace was signed, recommitting to the swift and inclusive implementation of the

Agreement.

The United Kingdom welcomes recent progress, notably the launching of the accelerated disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration (DDR) and integration process and the establishment of a working group on the participation of women in the peace process. We welcome the efforts of the Malian Prime Minister in support of the implementation of the Agreement, including the establishment of a new Ministry.

Mr President, these developments are welcome and they underscore the genuine importance that the Government attaches to the process. And having heard the Minister speak with passion and conviction, I know that she is also personally committed. However, there must be considerable and rapid further action in order to achieve the full implementation committed to by all parties to the Agreement.

For example, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, progress has been made to establish ten district level interim administrations. But steps must now be taken to operationalise these interim administrations. Of 72 civil administrators appointed in June of last year, only seven, we understand, have been deployed to their duty stations.

It is now three and a half years since the Agreement was signed. Timelines in the March 2018 roadmap have passed unfulfilled. We are encouraged by the Government's plans for 2019 and we hope that these will be successful in order for the Malian people to enjoy a more peaceful and prosperous future.

As ASG Keita recalls and the parties to Agreement will recall the Security Council's decision last month to place three individuals on the 2374 sanctions list for impeding the peace process. The parties will also recall our expressed readiness to take further such measures if needed.

The United Kingdom therefore reiterates our previous calls on the Government of Mali and the Plateforme and Coordination armed groups to redouble their efforts and take the additional steps needed for the immediate and full implementation of the Agreement. As ASG Keita said there is an impatience around the table about the missed milestones we have heard about session after session in this Council.

Mr President, turning to the situation on the ground, we recognise the challenging circumstances in which the Malian Government and MINUSMA operate. The United Kingdom unequivocally condemns recent attacks against MINUSMA personnel and supporting contractors. We express our condolences to the families of those who have tragically lost their lives and we thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and all of his staff for their important work in very challenging circumstances.

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned by the large numbers of civilians who continue to be affected by targeted terrorist attacks and intercommunal clashes, particularly in the centre of Mali.

We welcome the steps taken by the Government of Mali to re-establish state

presence via their integrated security plan for the centre. However, to ensure that the root causes of the instability in the centre are sustainably addressed, and to enable MINUSMA to provide complementary support, the United Kingdom encourages the Government to also develop a comprehensive political strategy for the centre.

Mr President, the human rights situation remains concerning. However the United Kingdom welcomes the progress that has been made in the prosecution of members of the Malian defence and security forces who were accused of perpetrating human rights violations. To increase the people's confidence in those defence forces, it is critical to thoroughly investigate all human rights violations and ensure justice and accountability.

Mr President, in conclusion, the United Kingdom welcomes recent steps that have been taken to foster stability in Mali. Now is the time for further action. Rapid progress is needed on the implementation of the peace agreement in a full, effective and inclusive manner while political, security and development efforts – particularly in central Mali – are intensified. And the United Kingdom stands ready to support. We are increasing our diplomatic presence in Mali, Niger and Chad. We have deployed Chinook helicopters to Operation Barkhane which provides logistical support to the G5 Sahel force. Our Department for International Development is spending \$370 million across the Sahel in the last four to five years, and we will significantly increase our development assistance in coming years.

Thank you Mr President.

Speech: PM statement to the House: 16 January 2019

On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I am pleased that this House has expressed its confidence in the government tonight.

I do not take this responsibility lightly.

And my government will continue its work to increase our prosperity, to guarantee our security, and to strengthen our Union.

And yes, we will also continue to work to deliver on the solemn promise we made to the people of this country to deliver on the result of the referendum, and leave the European Union.

I believe this duty is shared by every member of this House.

And we have a responsibility to identify a way forward that can secure the backing of the House.

To that end, I have proposed a series of meetings between senior parliamentarians and representatives of the government over the coming days.

And I would like to invite the leaders of parliamentary parties to meet with me individually, and I would like to start these meetings tonight.

Mr Speaker, the government approaches these meetings in a constructive spirit and I urge others to do the same.

But we must find solutions that are negotiable and command sufficient support in this House.

And, as I have said, we will return to the House on Monday to table an amendable motion and to make a statement about the way forward.

The House has put its confidence in this government.

I stand ready to work with any member of this House to deliver on Brexit, and ensure that this House retains the confidence of the British people.