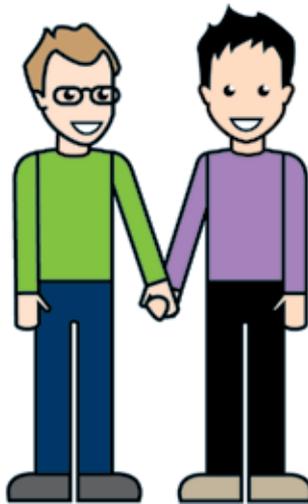
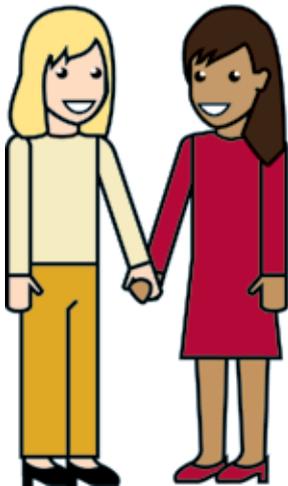




Government  
**Equalities** Office

Putting equality at the heart of government



# Equal marriage

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## What the government says

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Easy Read Document



Easy Read

# Important

This is a big booklet, but you may not want to read all of it.

Look at the list of contents on pages 3, 4 and 5. It shows what is in the booklet. Look down the list to find things you want to read about.

## Green writing

In this Easy Read booklet we sometimes explain what words mean.

The first time we mention any of these words, it is in **bold green** writing. We then write what the words mean in a blue box.

These words and what they mean are also in a Words list at the back of the booklet.

If any of the words are used later in the booklet, we show them in **normal green** writing. If you see words in **normal green** writing, you can look up what they mean by looking for the blue box earlier in the booklet, or by looking at the Words list.

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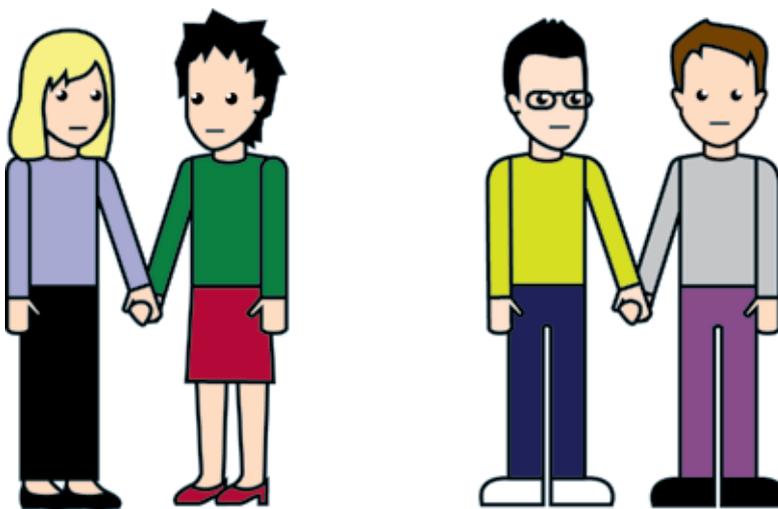
# What the Minister for Women and Equalities says

Marriage is very important. The rule that says 2 people make promises to each other when they get married holds families together over the years. It also makes our **society** strong.

## Society

**Society** means all the people and all parts of life in this country. Being part of **society** can mean being accepted and having your views listened to. It can mean being able to live where you want, vote for a government, or join a group. When people are accepted by others this makes a good **society**.

Marriage has changed over the years. At the moment anyone over the age of 16 can get married. Unless you are in love with someone of the same sex. This cannot be right.



The government wants equal rights for everyone. This means it cannot stop people from getting married unless there are very good reasons.

Being **lesbian**, **gay**, **bisexual** or **transgender** is not a good reason to stop people getting married.

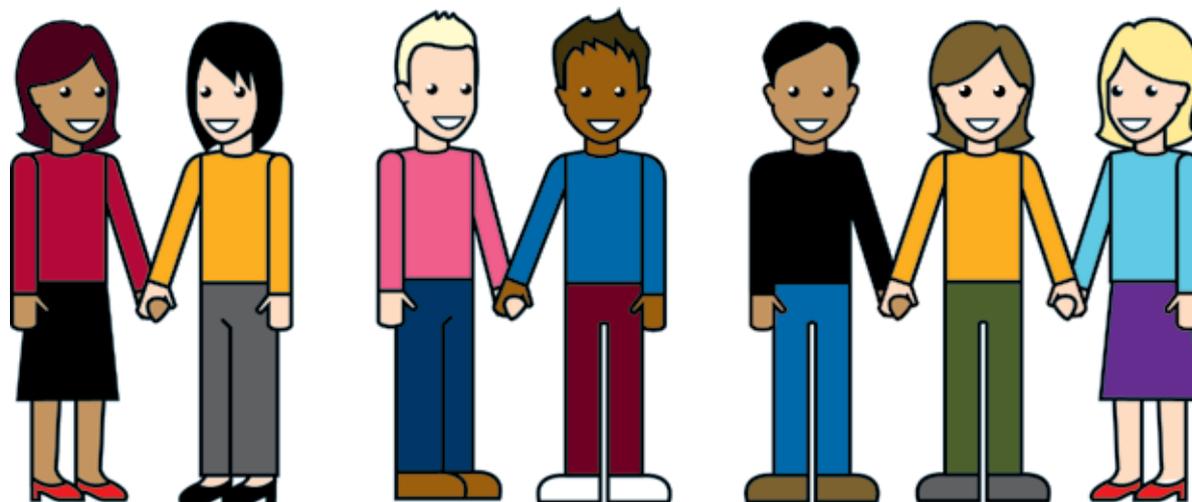
### Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

**Lesbians** are women who are attracted to other women.

**Gay men** are attracted to other men.

**Bisexual** people are attracted to men and to women.

**Transgender** people have changed their sex from being a man to being a woman, or from being a woman to being a man.



Some people say this was put right when **civil partnerships** began in 2005.

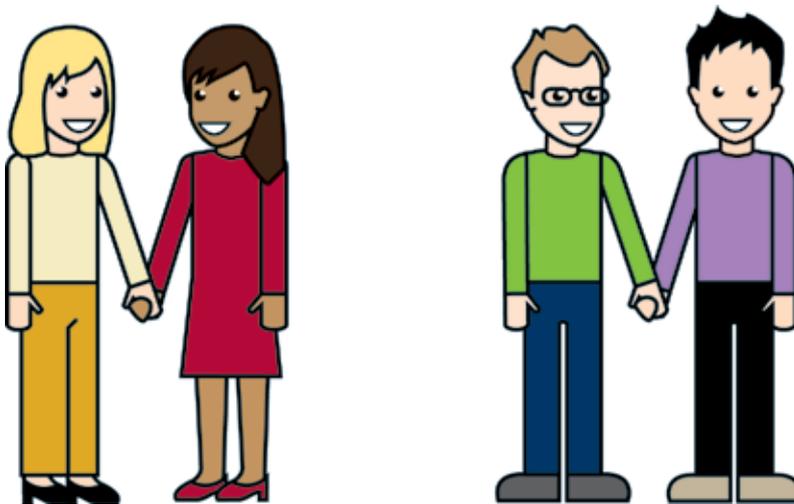
## Civil partnerships or civil partners

This is when two men or two women are in love and make promises to each other so that the law sees them as a couple. **Civil partnership** is not the same as marriage, but **civil partners** get many of the same rights as married people.

This was an important step forward for **same-sex couples**. But **same-sex couples** can still not get married.

## Same-sex couple

This is when two men or two women are in love with each other.



We do not want to change the way religious groups treat marriages.

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We want to keep **civil partnerships** for **same-sex couples** who do not want to be married.

The government is going to bring in new laws about marriage for **same-sex couples**. We will talk about these new laws in **Parliament**.

### Parliament

**Parliament** is where politicians, who are also called Members of **Parliament** or MPs, meet to decide rules and laws, and make decisions for the country. It is not the same as government, which runs the country.

We will keep meeting with and talking to people who are interested in the new laws.



*Maria Miller*

Maria Miller MP  
Minister for Women and Equalities

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## About the replies in a few words

When this booklet says ‘we’ or ‘us’ it means the government.

In March 2012 we began a **consultation**. The **consultation** asked for ideas about how we can give **same-sex couples** an equal right to get married.

### Consultation

This is when the government asks what people think about its plans, and for ideas about the best way of doing things.

The **consultation** ended on 14 June 2012. We had more than 228,000 replies to the **consultation**. This is the most replies we have ever had to a **consultation**.



We also got 19 lists signed by 500,000 people who do not want **same-sex couples** to be able to have a **civil marriage**. These lists are called petitions.

---

### Civil marriages

These are marriages that **are not** made in a religious building.

A lot of people said that they did not want **same-sex couples** to be able to get married.

But most people said that letting **same-sex couples** get married was a good idea.

So we want to let **same-sex couples** have a **civil marriage**.



### About the consultation and the law

In the **consultation** we made it clear that no religious group would be made to carry out marriages for **same-sex couples**.

---

We have looked at all the replies we got to the **consultation** and have come up with four extra points. These four points make it clear where we stand on **marriages** for **same-sex couples**.

We will protect religions.

1. We will make sure that the law says that no religious group can be made to marry **same-sex couples**. And they cannot be made to carry out marriages in their religious buildings.
2. If religious groups tell us that they want to marry **same-sex couples** then they will be allowed to do this.
3. We will change the **Equality Act 2010**. This means that religious groups who will not marry **same-sex couples** or let their buildings be used for same-sex marriages cannot be said to be **discriminating** against **same-sex couples**.

### Equality Act 2010

This is a law to make sure that all people are treated fairly and equally.

### Discrimination

This is when someone is treated unfairly because of something. People are sometimes discriminated against because of their age, because of the colour of their skin, or because they have a disability.

4. We will make sure that the law will not affect the way the Church of England and the Church in Wales are run.

We will carry on talking to religious groups as we get ready to make the new laws.

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## Religious marriages for same-sex couples

In the **consultation** we said that **same-sex couples** will not be able to have a **religious marriage**.

### Religious marriages

These are marriages that are made in a religious building.

Most people said that religious groups should be able to carry out **religious marriages** if they want to.

We want to let religious groups who do want to carry out **religious marriages** for **same-sex couples** do so. But we want to make it clear that they do not have to do this if they do not want to.



It will be against the law for **same-sex couples** to get married in a religious building if the religious group does not allow **same-sex couples** to get married.

## Civil partnerships

Most people who replied to the **consultation** and also the **lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender** groups we talked to said that **opposite-sex couples** should be able to become **civil partners**.

### Opposite-sex couple

This is when a man and a woman are in love with each other.

We do not think that **opposite-sex couples** need **civil partnerships**. They can get married if they want to.

So we will have **civil partnerships** only for **same-sex couples**.

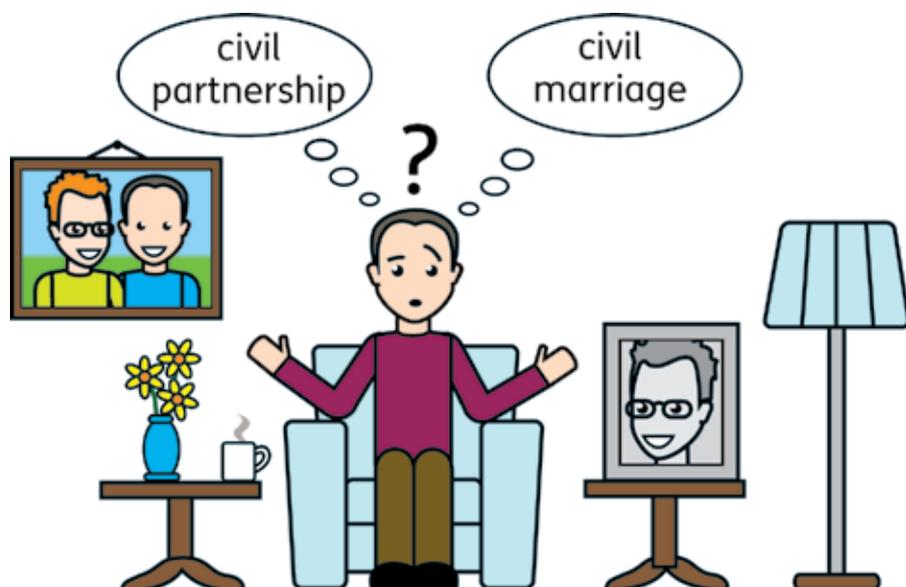
## Changing civil partnerships to marriage

We know that 50,000 couples have become **civil partners** since 2005. Some of these couples would have got married if they had been able to do so.

Most people who replied to this question in the **consultation** said that there should be a way to turn **civil partnerships** into marriages.

We spoke to **lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender** groups who also said this was a good idea.

We are going to let **same-sex couples** change their **civil partnerships** to marriage if they want to do this. There will not be a time limit for doing this.



## Transgender people

If a person wants a new birth certificate because their sex is different from when they were born, the law says that they must get a **gender recognition certificate**.

### Gender recognition certificate

This is a certificate from a group of experts called a gender recognition panel. The certificate says a person's sex is different from when they were born. The person uses this to get a new birth certificate showing their new details.

As things are now, married people and **civil partners** must end their marriage or **civil partnership** before they can get a full **gender recognition certificate**.

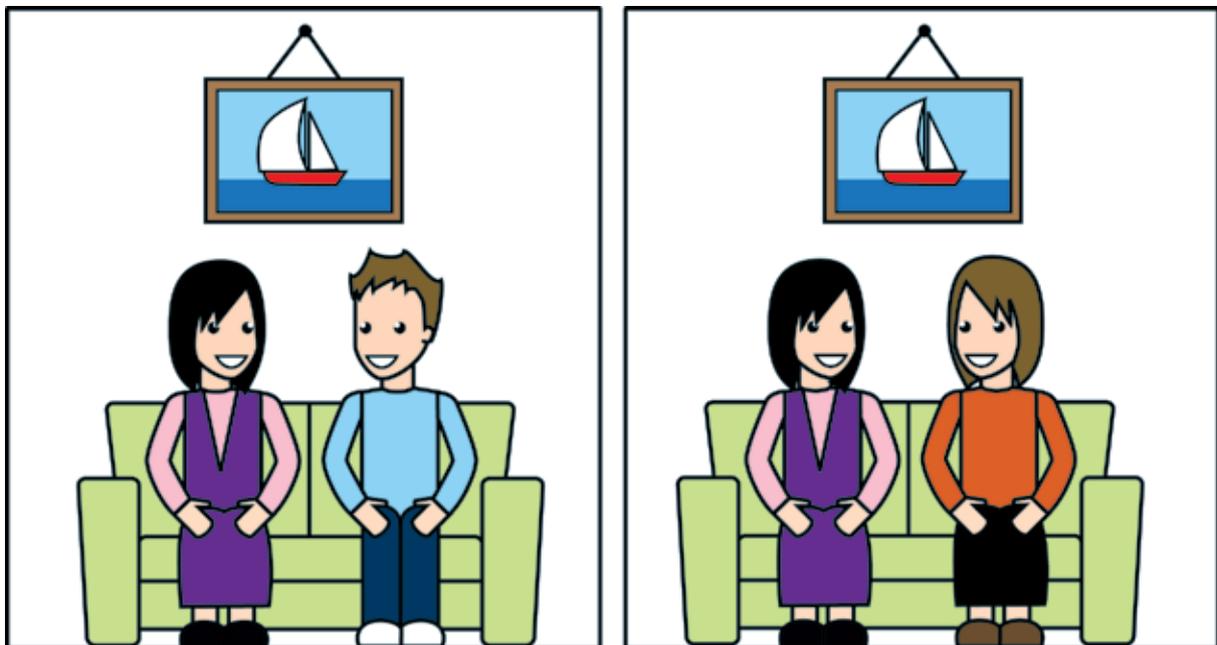
This is because

- the law says **same-sex couples** cannot be married.
- the law says **opposite-sex couples** cannot be **civil partners**.

This can cause a lot of upset for **transsexual people** and their partners. Especially those who want to stay together as married or **civil partners**. It also causes problems with pension and benefit records.

### Transsexual people

These are people who feel they were born the wrong sex. Such as someone who feels like they are a woman but they were born as a boy, or someone who feels like they are a man but they were born as a girl.



Most people who replied to this question in the **consultation** agreed with our plan to change the law so that people's sex could become different from when they were born and those people could stay married.

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### Other things to think about

At the moment, the **state pension** has different rules for men and women.

#### State pension

This is money most people get when they retire. It is paid out of money they pay to the government during their working life.

When **civil partnerships** started in 2005, the Department for Work and Pensions decided to treat all **civil partners** as married men when they were working out the **state pension**.

We are going to treat **same-sex couples** in the same way as **civil partners** and married men.

### What will happen next

We want to make these laws as soon as possible. We are trying to start this before **Parliament** finishes this term in May 2013.

We are working closely with all groups who have an interest in these plans.

# About the replies in full

## What the law says

At the moment the law says that only a man and a woman can get married. **Same-sex couples** cannot be married.

In 2005 **civil partnerships** began. From December 2011 **civil partnerships** can take place in religious buildings.

## What we asked in the consultation

We asked 16 questions about things like

- how **same-sex couples** could have a **civil marriage ceremony**?

### Ceremony

This is an event where a group of people get together to enjoy something special, such as a marriage. People often say special words at a **ceremony**.

- if **same-sex couples** should be able to have a **religious marriage ceremony**?
- if we should keep **civil partnerships** just for **same-sex couples**?
- how **civil partnerships** can be changed into marriages?

- if people's sex becomes different from when they were born should they be able to stay married?
- what effect these changes would have on other things, like pensions?



## The replies to the consultation

We got more than 228,000 replies to the **consultation**.

# Civil marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples

Marriage is about 2 people who love each other making promises to each other.

We do not think it makes any difference if the promises are made by **opposite-sex couples** or **same-sex couples**.

## What we asked in the consultation

We wanted to find out how we could let **same-sex couples** have a **civil marriage** ceremony.



We asked people to tell us if they thought **same-sex couples** and **opposite-sex couples** should have an equal right to a **civil marriage**. We also asked people to give us the reasons for their answer.

### What people said

We had more replies to these questions than any other question in the **consultation**.

- 53 out of every 100 people who replied said that **same-sex couples** should be able to have a **civil marriage**.
- 46 out of every 100 people who replied said that **same-sex couples** should not be able to have a **civil marriage**.
- 1 out of every 100 people who replied said they did not know or they were not sure if **same-sex couples** should be able to have a **civil marriage**.

We also got 19 lists signed by 500,000 people who do not want **same-sex couples** to be able to have a **civil marriage**. These lists are called petitions.

The people who thought that **same-sex couples** should be able to have a **civil marriage** said these things.

- **Civil marriage** for **same-sex couples** will be a big step forward in our **society**.
- There are too many differences between marriage and **civil partnerships**. This means that some people try to upset **same-sex couples** by saying things like they are not really married and they are only **civil partners**.
- It will give **equality** to **same-sex couples**. **Civil marriage** is part of the human rights of **same-sex couples**.

## Equality

This means having the same chances in life as everyone else.

- Letting **same-sex couples** get married would be good for **society**. It would also help to change the way people think and act towards **same-sex couples**.



The people who think that **same-sex couples** should **not** be able to have a **civil marriage** said these things.

- Marriage is for **opposite-sex couples** not **same-sex couples**.
- **Civil partnerships** are enough for **same-sex couples**. There is no need to allow **same-sex couples** to get married.
- Letting **same-sex couples** get married would be bad for **society**. It would send out the wrong message to children.

- It would have a bad effect on all people's marriages.
- It is against **equality**. It is for **lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender** people, but against people of a religious faith.

### What the government says

We know that people think strongly about this.

We have looked at all the replies and we think that **same-sex couples** should be able to have a **civil marriage**

## Religious marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples

Religion is a very important part of our **society**.

We know that many religious people are worried about letting **same-sex couples** get married.

**Religious marriage** ceremonies can be carried out in many ways.

- The Church of England or the Church in Wales can do marriages
- The Quakers, also called the **Society** of Friends, can do marriages
- The Jewish religion can do marriages
- A **registrar** can do marriages in many places.

## Registrar

This is someone the law allows to make **civil marriages**. **Registrars** can make **civil marriages** in register offices, approved places like hotels, in a person's home or in hospital if they are very ill, or in a prison.

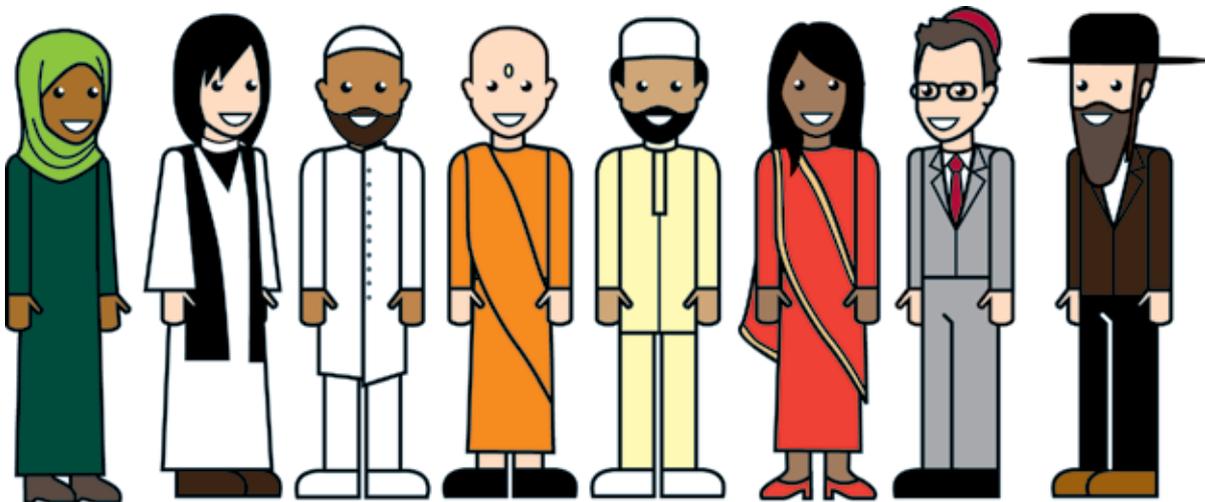
## What we asked in the consultation

We asked people to tell us if they agreed with us that **same-sex couples** should not be able to have a **religious marriage**.

We made it clear that we would not make the Church of England or the Church in Wales carry out **same-sex marriages**.

We know that the holy books of many religions say that marriage can only be between a man and a woman. We do not want to change people's religious beliefs and guidance.

We will make sure that the law allows people to talk about their belief that marriage should only be between a man and a woman.



### What people said

Most people who answered this question said that **same-sex couples** should be allowed to have a **religious marriage**.

- 63 out of every 100 people who replied said that **same-sex couples** should be able to have a **religious marriage**.
- 27 out of every 100 people who replied said that **same-sex couples** should **not** be able to have a **religious marriage**.
- 10 out of every 100 people who replied did not know if **same-sex couples** should be able to have a **religious marriage**.

Some religious groups said they wanted to carry out **religious marriages** for **same-sex couples**.

Other groups said that each place of worship or each religious group should be able to choose if they wanted to carry out **religious marriages** for **same-sex couples**.

A few people said that all religious groups should be made to carry out **religious marriages** for **same-sex couples**.

The people who said that **same-sex couples** should not be allowed to have a **religious marriage** said that they were worried that religious groups could be made to carry out **religious marriages** for **same-sex couples** even if they do not agree with it.

## What the government says

We know and respect the important part that religion plays in **society**.



We know there are many **lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender** people who are religious. We also know that many religious people agree with letting **same-sex couples** have a **religious marriage** in their place of worship.

We have looked at all the replies we got. We think that once **same-sex couples** can get married, religious groups should be allowed to carry out **religious marriage ceremonies** if they want to.

We will keep working with religious groups who want to marry **same-sex couples** as we work out the rules to make this happen.

We will protect religious groups who do not want to marry **same-sex couples**.

- The law will say that religious groups cannot be made to marry **same-sex couples**. And they cannot be made to let **same-sex couples** use their buildings to get married in.
- It will be against the law for a member of a religious group to marry **same-sex couples** unless the religious group it agrees to do so. And the religious group must follow the rules we will make when we change the law.

These 2 points will make sure that people cannot take action against a religious group if they do not agree to marry **same-sex couples**.

We will change the **Equality Act 2010** so that people cannot say that a religious group **discriminated** against them because it would not marry them or let them use a religious building to get married in.

The Church of England and the Church in Wales will not be affected by the new law.

We know there is still a lot of work to be done to make sure the law works properly.

We need to make sure that we can let religious groups marry **same-sex couples** if they want to. We also need to make sure that religious groups who do not want to carry out **religious marriages** for **same-sex couples** are protected.

## Civil partnerships

When **civil partnerships** began in 2005 it was an important step forward for **same-sex couples**. It changed things so that the law treated their promises to each other in the same way as the promises made by **opposite-sex couples**.

- For the first time, **same-sex couples** could have the same rights, protection and duties as other couples.
- Since 2005 there have been more than 50,000 **civil partnerships**.



- **Opposite-sex couples** cannot become **civil partners**.
- Different laws apply to **civil partnerships** and marriages.

From December 2011 **same-sex couples** were allowed to register their **civil partnership** in religious buildings. This can only happen when the religious group agrees to do this and the signing of the **civil partnership** must not be religious.

### What we asked in the consultation

In the **consultation** we said that we wanted to keep **civil partnerships** for **same-sex couples**.

This includes letting **civil partnerships** take place in religious buildings.

We asked if people thought we should keep **civil partnerships** once **same-sex couples** were allowed to get married.

### What people said

Most people agreed that we should keep **civil partnerships** once **same-sex couples** were allowed to get married.

- 66 out of every 100 people who replied said that we should keep **civil partnerships** once **same-sex couples** were allowed to get married.
- 20 out of every 100 people who replied said that we should not keep **civil partnerships** once **same-sex couples** were allowed to get married.
- 14 out of every 100 people who replied said they did not know or were not sure if we should keep **civil partnerships** once **same-sex couples** were allowed to get married.

Those people who did not want us to keep **civil partnerships** came up with 2 reasons.

- Some people did not agree with the idea of **civil partnerships**.
- Some people said that once **same-sex couples** could get married there would be no need for **civil partnerships**. This would make all married couples equal.

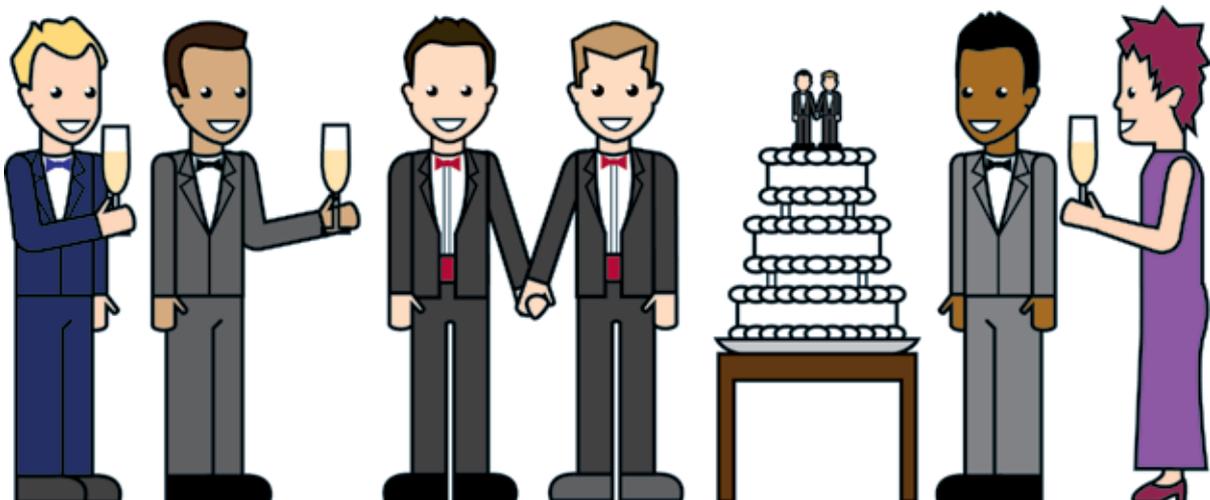
### What the government says

We have looked at all the replies.

We want to keep **civil partnerships** for **same-sex couples** only. We also want to carry on letting **same-sex couples** register their **civil partnership** in religious buildings.

We think that **civil partnerships** play an important part in the lives of many couples. We do not think there is any good reason to stop them.

This **consultation** was always about letting **same-sex couples** get married. There is no need to get rid of **civil partnerships** for same-sex marriages to happen.



## Changing civil partnerships to marriage

We know that if **same-sex couples** had been allowed to get married, some of them would have got married instead of getting a **civil partnership**.

For this reason we want to allow **same-sex couples** to change their **civil partnership** to a marriage if they want to.



This would also be important to couples in a **civil partnership** when one person would be asking for a **gender recognition certificate** because their sex was different from when they were born.

## What we asked in the consultation

In the **consultation** we asked 3 questions about this.

- Question 9. If you are a **civil partner** would you want to change your **civil partnership** into a marriage?
- Question 10. Do you agree or disagree that there should be no time limit on changing a **civil partnership** into a marriage?
- Question 11. Do you agree or disagree that **same-sex couples** should be able to choose to have a **ceremony** when they change their **civil partnership** into a marriage?

## What people said

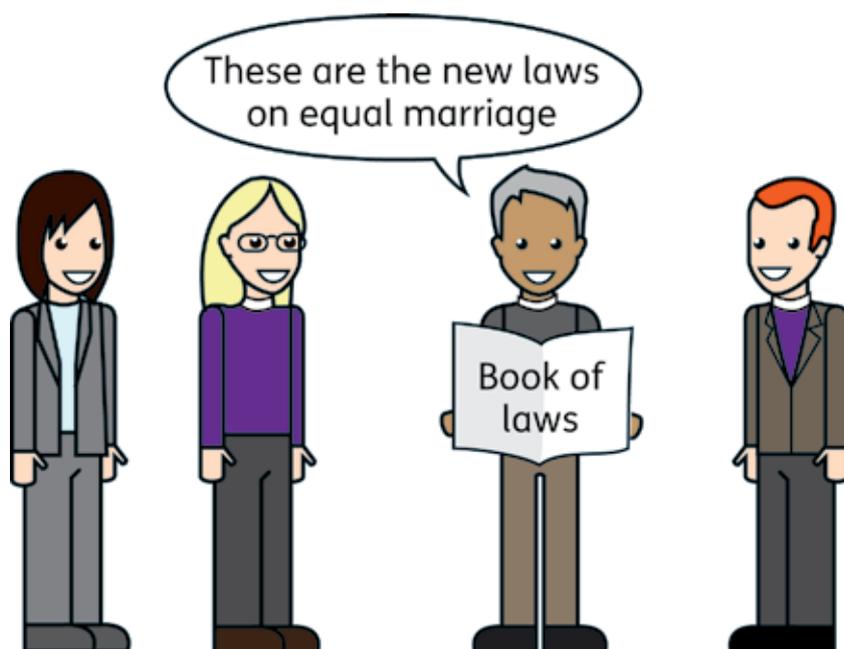
### Question 9

For the question that asked if you are a **civil partner** would you want to change your **civil partnership** into a marriage?

- 87 out of every 100 people who replied said they would change their **civil partnership** into a marriage.
- 6 out of every 100 people who replied said they would not change their **civil partnership** into a marriage.
- 8 out of every 100 people who replied said they did not know or were not sure if they would change their **civil partnership** into a marriage.

The number of people who replied to this question gives us an idea of how many people would want to change their **civil partnership** to a marriage.

We will think more about this and we will write about the best way to do it when we show the new laws to **Parliament**.



### Question 10

For the question that asked do you agree or disagree that there should be no time limit on changing a **civil partnership** into a marriage?

- 81 out of every 100 people who replied agreed that there should be no time limit on changing a **civil partnership** into a marriage.
- 7 out of every 100 people who replied did not agree that there should be no time limit on changing a **civil partnership** into a marriage.

- 12 out of every 100 people who replied said they did not know or were not sure if there should be a time limit on changing a **civil partnership** into a marriage.

Most people agreed with us that there should not be a time limit for changing a **civil partnership** into a marriage.

### Question 11

For the question that asked do you agree or disagree that **same-sex couples** should be able to have the choice to have a **ceremony** when they change their **civil partnership** into a marriage?

- 81 out of every 100 people who replied agreed that there should be a **ceremony** when **same-sex couples** change their **civil partnership** into a marriage.
- 9 out of every 100 people who replied did not agree that there should be a **ceremony** when **same-sex couples** change their **civil partnership** into a marriage.
- 10 out of every 100 people who replied did not know or were not sure if there should be a **ceremony** when **same-sex couples** change their **civil partnership** into a marriage.

Most people agreed that **same-sex couples** should be able to have a **ceremony** if they wanted one.

Some people said that the **ceremony** should not be part of the law. They said the **ceremony** should be like the one that **opposite-sex couples** use when they renew the promises they made when they got married.

Some religious groups said that the **ceremony** could take place in religious buildings if the religious groups that own the buildings agree to this.

### What the government says

We want to make sure that **same-sex couples** can change their **civil partnership** into a marriage if they want to.

We also want to make sure that any **same-sex couples** who do not want to change their **civil partnership** into a marriage are not treated badly and do not lose any of their rights.

We will say more about changing a **civil partnership** into a marriage at a later date.

But we think that people will only be able to change a **civil partnership** to a marriage if they are in the country where the **civil partnership** was made.

So, for example, if a **civil partnership** was made in Scotland or Northern Ireland, the couple will not be able to change it to a marriage in England or Wales.

We will look into what will happen if a **civil partnership** was made in places like an army base or a British embassy in another country.

We think it will cost about £100 to change a **civil partnership** into a marriage. This is about the same as it costs an **opposite-sex couple** to get married.



We will not put a time limit on changing a **civil partnership** into a marriage. This will let people stay together if one person changes their sex.

We will let people have a **ceremony** when they change their **civil partnership** into a marriage if they want one. A **ceremony** can only be held in a religious building if the religious group agrees.

We will not let people change from a marriage to a **civil partnership** as we do not think that this is needed.

## Civil partnerships for opposite-sex couples

At the moment, **opposite-sex couples** cannot become **civil partners**. Only **same-sex couples** can become **civil partners**.

### What we asked in the consultation

In the **consultation** we said the government is not thinking about **civil partnerships** for **opposite-sex couples**. Do you agree or disagree with this?

### What people said

- 24 out of every 100 people who replied said that **opposite-sex couples** should **not** be able to become **civil partners**.
- 61 out of every 100 people who replied said that **opposite-sex couples** should be able to become **civil partners**.
- 15 out of every 100 people who replied said they did not know or were not sure if **opposite-sex couples** should be able to become **civil partners**.

Most people did not agree with us and thought that **opposite-sex couples** should be able to become **civil partners**.

## What the government says

**Civil partnerships** began in 2005. It changed things so that the law treated the promises **same-sex couples** made to each other in the same way as the promises made by **opposite-sex couples** when they got married.



**Civil partners** have the same kind of rights and duties as married couples.

**Civil partnerships** were not meant to be something that **opposite-sex couples** could choose instead of marriage.

So, we do not think that we need to give **opposite-sex couples** the choice between marriage or **civil partnership**.

**Opposite-sex couples** can have a **civil marriage** or a **religious marriage**. We know that some **opposite-sex couples** do not want to get married but that is their choice.

The replies we got to the **consultation** do not say why it is bad for **opposite-sex couples** not to be able to become **civil partners**.

The **consultation** was not looking at making changes to the law about marriage and **civil partnership**.

We do not think we need to give **opposite-sex couples** the choice of becoming **civil partners** so that **same-sex couples** can get married.

## Transgender people

If a person's sex is different from when they were born the law says that they must get a **gender recognition certificate**.

At the moment, married people and **civil partners** must end their marriage or **civil partnership** before they can get a full **gender recognition certificate**.

This is because

- the law says **same-sex couples** cannot be married.
- the law says **opposite-sex couples** cannot be **civil partners**.

This can cause a lot of upset for **transsexual people** and their partners, especially those who want to stay together as married couples or **civil partners**. It can also cause problems with pensions and benefit records.

We believe that if a couple want to stay together while one person gets a **gender recognition certificate** we should not stop them doing this.

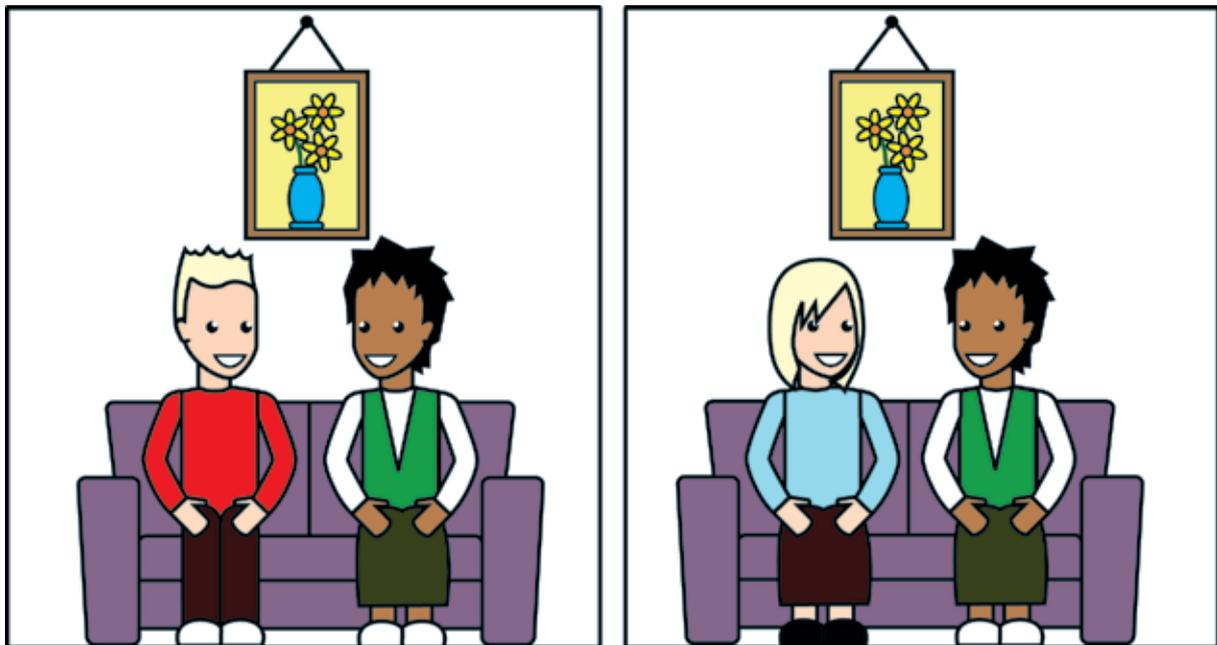
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## What we asked in the consultation

In the **consultation** we said we want to make sure **transsexual people** do not have to end a marriage if they want their sex to be different from when they were born.

As the law is now, if a man and a woman are married and the man wants his sex to be different from when he was born, the couple must end their marriage, even if they want to stay together. This is because the law does not allow same-sex marriages.

But if we change the law, the man's sex could become different to when he was born and the couple could stay married as a **same-sex couple**.



In the **consultation** we asked 2 questions about this.

- Question 12. If you are a married **transsexual person**, would you want to stay married while you are getting a full **gender recognition certificate**?

- Question 13. If you are married to a **transsexual person**, would you want to stay married while your partner is getting a full **gender recognition certificate**?

### What people said

#### Question 12

- 79 out of every 100 people who replied said they would want to stay married while getting a **gender recognition certificate**.
- 7 out of every 100 people who replied said they would not want to stay married while getting a **gender recognition certificate**.
- 14 out of every 100 people who replied said they did not know or were not sure if they would want to stay married while getting a **gender recognition certificate**.

#### Question 13

- 79 out of every 100 people who replied said they would want to stay married while their partner is getting a **gender recognition certificate**.
- 7 out of every 100 people who replied said they would not want to stay married while their partner is getting a **gender recognition certificate**.
- 14 out of every 100 people who replied said they did not know or were not sure if they would want to stay married while their partner is getting a **gender recognition certificate**.

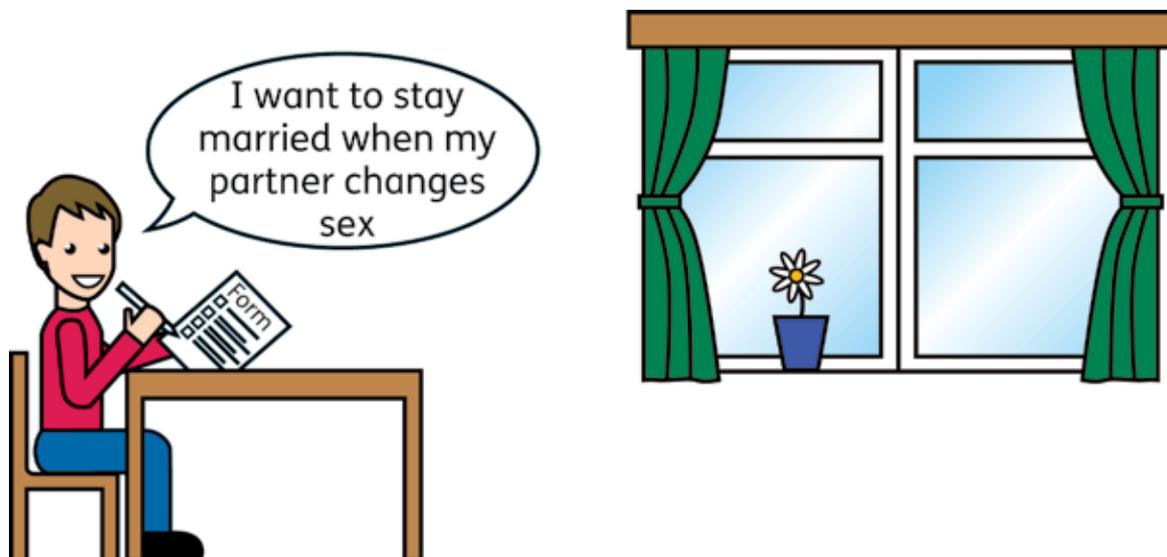
## What the government says

We want to let people stay married if a partner wants their sex to be different from when they were born.

Couples in a **civil partnership** would be able to change their **civil partnership** into a marriage without ending their **civil partnership** or losing any rights.

The process for getting a full **gender recognition certificate** will not take into account whether the person is in a **civil marriage** or a **religious marriage**.

If a person wants their sex to be different from when they were born, the rights of their partner must be taken into account. The partner will have to sign a form saying that they want to stay married when their partner's sex is different from when they were born.



If the partner does not want to stay married they will be able to end the marriage.

We know that some couples have had to end their marriages so that their partner can get a **gender recognition certificate**. This may have had a bad effect on their benefits. We will not be able to put right any bad effect on their benefits that happened before any changes that happen because of this **consultation**.

For **state pensions** and work pensions we are going to treat married **same-sex couples** as **civil partners**.

But we are going to make a rule that says if a married woman's husband gets a **gender recognition certificate** because his sex is different from when he was born, the married woman will still get a **state pension** based on her husband's **National Insurance Contributions**.

### National Insurance Contributions

When you work you pay **National Insurance Contributions** so that you can get some benefits.

The amount you pay depends on how much you earn and whether you are employed or self-employed. You stop paying when you get to **state pension** age.

We will carry on working with the gender recognition panel, **transsexual people's** groups and **transsexual people's** partners to make sure the new system works properly.

Marriage is one of the things that is looked after by the **devolved governments** in Northern Ireland and Scotland. So, for example, if a couple get married in Northern Ireland they will not be able to stay married if one partner wants their sex to be different from when they were born and get a **gender recognition certificate**. The Scottish government is going to set up its own rules.

### Devolved governments

These are the governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The UK government has given **devolved governments** the power to make some decisions for their own areas.

## Other things

This is the last part of this booklet. It is about other things we need to think about when we want to let **same-sex couples** get married.

### The way marriages and civil partnerships will be carried out

In most cases, the way marriages and **civil partnerships** will be carried out will stay the same as they are now.

The promises that are spoken as part of the marriage **ceremony** will stay the same. But we will use the words husband and husband or wife and wife for **same-sex couples**.

No one will be able to marry a close family member or get married until they reach age 16.

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People can get married or enter into a **civil partnership** in British buildings, called embassies, in other countries. This can only be done if the other country agrees and they do not allow same-sex marriages or **civil partnerships** in their countries. We do not know yet which countries will allow this.



### Devolved government

Marriage is one of the things that is looked after by the **devolved governments** in Northern Ireland and Scotland. This **consultation** only applied to England and Wales.

On 25 July 2012 the Scottish Government said it had plans to allow **same-sex couples** to get married. We are going to work closely with the Scottish Government to make sure our 2 systems for same-sex marriage work together.

Northern Ireland has no plans to allow same-sex marriage. We think that any couples who get married in England or Wales will be treated as **civil partners** in Northern Ireland.

## Ending a marriage or civil partnership

At the moment, the law is different for ending marriages and **civil partnerships**.

For example, a court can end a marriage if a married person has a love affair with another person. But a **civil partner** cannot use this as a reason to end a **civil partnership**.



We are going to change the law. Once **same-sex couples** can get married the same rules will apply to all marriages.

But the law for ending **civil partnerships** will not change. This only applies to same-sex marriages.

### Other countries

When **opposite-sex couples** get married in another country they are treated as being married in England and Wales.

But if **same-sex couples** get married in another country they are treated as **civil partners** in England and Wales.

We are going to change the law so that

- **same-sex couples** who get married in another country will be treated as a married couple in England and Wales.
- **same-sex couples** who enter into a **civil partnership** in another country will be treated as **civil partners** in England and Wales.

We know some other countries do not accept our **civil partnerships** and they will not accept our same-sex marriages. We will keep working to get more countries to accept **same-sex couples** whether they are in a **civil partnership** or a marriage.

Some **same-sex couples** will get married in this country and then go to live in another country. If they want to end their marriage this can be hard if the country where they are living does not accept that they are married. In these cases we will allow those couples to end their marriage in this country.

## Pensions

The government is working to get full **equality** across **state pensions** for men and women whatever their **sexual orientation**.

### Sexual orientation

This is about whether a person is lesbian, gay, bisexual or asexual.

Lesbian means a woman whose partner is a woman.

Gay means a man whose partner is a man.

Bisexual means someone who is attracted to men and women.

Asexual means someone who is not attracted to men or women.

For **state pensions** and work pensions we are going to treat married **same-sex couples** as **civil partners**.

### The words we use

Some people were worried that we would stop using the words husband and wife if we let **same-sex couples** get married.

We will not do this. **Same-sex couples** will be called husband and husband or wife and wife. **Opposite-sex couples** will be called husband and wife.

### Free speech

We know that the holy books of many religions say that marriage can only be between a man and a woman. We do not want to change people's religious beliefs and guidance.

We will make sure the law lets people talk about their belief that only a man and a woman should get married.



But this does not mean that people are allowed to say bad things about other people. This can lead to **hate crime** and that is against the law.

### Hate crime

This is when someone does something against the law to another person because of hate or because they are different.

## Learning in schools

Some people are worried that we will make teachers tell children that **same-sex couples** can get married. Most of these people did not agree with same-sex marriage.

Schools must not teach children about anything that does not fit in with the child's age, religion or culture. Children will get fair advice about marriage.

Children who go to faith schools will be told about their religion's belief that marriage should be between a man and a woman. But the teachers must also say that the law says that **same-sex couples** can get married.

## Parents

We support all families, including **same-sex couples** to be parents. We think that **same-sex couples** can bring up children just as well as **opposite-sex couples**.

Most people who replied to the **consultation** agree with this.

## Health

A number of people who replied to the **consultation** said that letting **same-sex couples** get married was good for their health.

In America, in the 12 months after **same-sex couples** were allowed to get married, gay men went to see a doctor much less often.

## Words list

### Ceremony

This is an event where a group of people get together to enjoy something special, such as a marriage. People often say special words at a **ceremony**. . . . .18

### Civil partnerships or civil partners

This is when two men or two women are in love and make promises to each other so that the law sees them as a couple. **Civil partnership** is not the same as marriage, but **civil partners** get many of the same rights as married people . . . . .8

### Civil marriages

These are marriages that are not made in a religious building . . . . .11

### Consultation

This is when the Government asks what people think about its plans, and for ideas about the best way of doing things. . .10

### Devolved governments

These are the governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The UK government has given **devolved governments** the power to make some decisions for their own areas . . . . .44

## Discrimination

This is when someone is treated unfairly because of something. People are sometimes discriminated against because of their age, because of the colour of their skin, or because they have a disability. . . . .12

## Equality

This means having the same chances in life as everyone else. . . . .22

## Equality Act 2010

This is a law to make sure that all people are treated fairly and equally . . . . .12

## Gender recognition certificate

This is a certificate from a group of experts called a gender recognition panel. The certificate says a person’s sex is different from when they were born. The person uses this to get a new birth certificate showing their new details. . . . .15

## Hate crime

This is when someone does something against the law to another person because of hate or because they are different . . . . .49

## Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

Lesbians are women who are attracted to other women.

Gay men are attracted to other men.

Bisexual people are attracted to men and to women.

Transgender people have changed their sex from being a man to being a woman, or from being a woman to being a man. . . . .7

## National Insurance Contributions

When you work you pay **National Insurance Contributions** so that you can get some benefits.

The amount you pay depends on how much you earn and whether you are employed or self-employed. You stop paying when you get to **State Pension** age. . . . .43

## Opposite-sex couple

This is when a man and a woman are in love with each other . . . . .14

## Parliament

**Parliament** is where politicians, who are also called Members of **Parliament** or MPs, meet to decide rules and laws, and make decisions for the country. It is not the same as government, which runs the country . . . . .9

## Registrar

This is someone the law allows to make **civil marriages**. **Registrars** can make **civil marriages** in register offices, approved places like hotels, in a person’s home or in hospital if they are very ill, or in a prison .....24

## Religious marriages

These are marriages that made in a religious building. ....13

## Same-sex couple

This is when two men or two women are in love with each other .....8

## Sexual orientation

This is about whether a person is lesbian, gay, bisexual or asexual.

**Lesbian** means a woman whose partner is a woman.

**Gay** means a man whose partner is a man.

**Bisexual** means someone who is attracted to men and women.

Asexual means someone who is not attracted to men or women.....48

## Society

**Society** means all the people and all parts of life in this country. Being part of **society** can mean being accepted and having your views listened to. It can mean being able to live where you want, vote for a government, or join a group. When people are accepted by others this makes a good **society**. . . . .6

## State pension

This is money most people get when they retire. It is paid out of money they pay to the government during their working life. . . . .17

## Transsexual people

These are people who feel they were born the wrong sex. Such as someone who feels like they are a woman but they were born as a boy, or someone who feels like they are a man but they were born as a girl. . . . .16

# How to contact us

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