



29 May 2021

Dear Stonewall Diversity Champions Scheme Member

We are writing to call on you to withdraw from the scheme, both for the sake of your own reputation and as a necessary step to protecting the rights of all your employees, in particular in relation to discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation and religion or belief, as established by the Equality Act 2010.

You may have seen the flurry of terrible headlines about Stonewall in recent days. On May 18th an independent report into no-platforming at the University of Essex by Akua Reindorf, a highly respected barrister, showed how the charity's advice to its Diversity Champions contradicts UK equality law. Following this advice puts an employer at risk of committing unlawful discrimination and condoning workplace bullying. Influenced by Stonewall's elastic definition of "transphobia"—to include, among other things, defending the current wording of the Equality Act, and women's legal rights to single-sex spaces and sports—Essex University had breached two visiting professors' freedom of expression. It had also failed to investigate threats of violence against one of them and a tweet by a staff member comparing the views of the other—a Jewish human-rights professor—to Holocaust denial. Reindorf recommended that the university consider breaking from Stonewall "in light of the drawbacks and potential illegalities" that had arisen from the relationship.

On May 24th news broke that the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the government body that oversees compliance with equality law, had left the Stonewall Diversity Champion Scheme in March. A few days later it emerged that the employment arbitration service, ACAS, which also has a statutory remit to uphold equality law, had also left the scheme. Both cited cost and value for money as the reasons; but given the increasing awareness of the clash between "Stonewall law" and the Equality Act, many wonder if this is a figleaf.

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And now Stonewall's chief executive, Nancy Kelley, has publicly compared those who disagree with the charity's approach to anti-Semites. In an interview published on the BBC website on May 29th, she said that "gender-critical" views—the belief that sex is binary and immutable—were so dangerous and bigoted that they should be silenced. Challenged by the interviewer, she insisted that "the analogy is apt".

Stonewall, a once-admirable organisation that fought for tolerance and against bigotry, has lost its way. It misrepresents British law, and encourages the bullying of female employees and anyone who disagrees with its agenda of replacing sex with self-identified gender in all situations: from prisons to rugby; and from healthcare records to the census. For many employees, the workplaces created by the Diversity Champions Scheme are not tolerant, but toxic.

On June 15th, this year's Workplace Equality Index scheme will open, closing on October 5th. Your organisation will be invited to submit its policies for Stonewall's approval and to ask staff to complete Stonewall's Survey. Your HR and diversity staff will come under pressure from Stonewall's sales team for the organisation to participate. If they are to stand up against this browbeating, they will need you to show leadership. It's time to leave Stonewall. Pledging allegiance to Stonewall no longer signals an employer's commitment to equality and diversity; rather, it is a serious reputational and legal risk.

We call on you to leave the Diversity Champions Scheme, thus reaffirming your commitment to creating a workplace where *all* your employees are respected and valued.

Yours faithfully,

Rebecca Bull, Naomi Cunningham, Maya Forstater and Emma Hilton

Sex Matters Co-founders