



## **Allison Bailey v Linnaeus Veterinary Ltd (trading as Palmerston Veterinary Group)**

*First court ruling on gender-critical belief discrimination by a service provider*

**Jurisdiction:** County Court

**Sector:** Service provision

**Cause of action:** Belief discrimination

**Legal representation:** Peter Daly, Doyle Clayton (solicitor), Akua Reindorf KC (counsel)

**Decisions:** [Allison Bailey v Linnaeus Veterinary Ltd \(County Court Judgment\)](#)

### **Summary of events**

Allison Bailey was a client of Palmerston Veterinary Group with her dogs for over 13 years until she was deregistered in January 2023, after she had made a complaint about the quality of service.

Bailey holds the gender-critical belief that sex is binary, immutable and important. These beliefs had brought her to public attention in previous successful litigation against her former barristers' chambers and Stonewall, when she established that she had suffered unlawful belief discrimination.

Following a difficult conversation with a staff member about the medication available for her dog, Bailey made a written complaint. Staff alleged that she had a history of being aggressive and rude; without giving her warning or opportunity to respond, the surgery wrote to tell her she had been deregistered. The company claimed that her behaviour had been inappropriate, and that it had breached their "zero-tolerance" policy against abuse towards their staff.

The tribunal heard that while Bailey had been a sometimes difficult client, she had not been abusive. She had discussed her employment tribunal with her vet, and there had been gossip around the surgery concerning Bailey being a friend of JK Rowling.

The practice manager, Sarah Cook, who was a key influence in the decision to deregister Bailey, denied being aware of Bailey's connection with Rowling, but the tribunal concluded that this seemed unlikely. Cook said she did not know about Rowling's views on sex and gender, but "if she had known more, she might have been disappointed". The judge concluded:

**"It appears to me that Ms Cook was, in fact, disappointed upon learning about Rowling's gender critical views." [paragraph 55].**

Dr Liz Munro, the member of the senior leadership team who signed the deregistration letter, initially denied that she knew anything about Ms Bailey but later admitted that she had been told she is a barrister who is black, gay and a friend of JK Rowling.

It emerged that Dr Munro had held a team meeting on 10th June 2021 – the day that gender-critical beliefs were declared “worthy of respect in a democratic society” by the Employment Appeal Tribunal in the case of Forstater. At this meeting, she introduced “terminology on how to address transgender people”. This included instructions such as not to say “he was born a girl”, but “he was assigned female at birth”.

Dr Munro said she did not have strong feelings but chose to share this post in a team meeting, as she did not know a lot about preferred pronouns and terminology and thought that others might feel the same. However, when asked whether she considered gender-critical beliefs to be bigoted. Dr Munro took a long time to consider. She said she was not sure she would go as far as to use the word bigot, but maybe she would.

## **Outcome**

The court ruled that the deregistration of Ms Bailey was unlawful and constituted discrimination on the basis of her gender-critical beliefs.

This is the first goods and services case of gender-critical belief discrimination that has come to court. The case demonstrates that protection against gender-critical belief discrimination is not confined to employment relationships, but that service providers can also face liability if they discriminate against someone for being a “friend of JK Rowling”.

Damages and costs are to be determined at a future hearing.