

Lawrence Tallon and Professor Anthony Harnden
Chief Executive and Chair
Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency
10 South Colonnade
London E14 4PU

1st March 2026

Dear Mr Tallon and Professor Harden,

As you may know, Sex Matters is a human-rights charity concerned with clarity about sex in law, language and policy in the UK.

We are shocked that the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has recused its Chief Medical and Scientific Officer from decision-making on the PATHWAYS puberty-blockers trial because of a media witch-hunt against him for expressing “gender-critical” beliefs.

This is a scandal that undermines trust in medical regulation in the UK.

It is also unlawful, contrary to your legal duty not to discriminate against or harass employees on the basis of belief. Harassment is defined in the Equality Act in terms of creating an “intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating and offensive environment” in relation to a protected characteristic. Your actions have done this, leading to harassment against Professor Jacob George and any other employees who hold what have been termed “gender-critical” views.

These views are not esoteric or controversial. They are nothing other than clarity about the facts that there are two sexes and that human beings cannot change sex, and a recognition that acknowledging and acting on these facts is important for protecting people’s human rights, for health and safety and for the rule of law. In fact recognising these facts is not only reasonable and lawful, it is essential for anyone employed in medical regulation.

We urge you to reinstate Professor George with a full apology in order to clear his name and to reassure your other staff that those expressing gender-critical views (or disagreeing with gender ideology) are not at risk of similar discrimination and harassment.

The facts

These are the facts as we understand them from information that is in the public domain:

1. MHRA advertised for a Chief Medical and Scientific Officer in summer 2025, with a closing date of 7th September. The appointment of Professor Jacob George, then Chair of Cardiovascular

Sex Matters is a human-rights charity promoting clarity about sex in law, policy and language
sex-matters.org | info@sex-matters.org

Trustees: Emma Hilton (chair), Michael Biggs, Rebecca Bull, Charlotte Cadden, Anya Palmer

Medicine and Therapeutics, Cardiology at the University of Dundee, was announced on 4th November 2025.¹

2. On 7th November 2025 the MHRA wrote to the PATHWAYS trial sponsor, King's College London (KCL), accepting the request for the clinical trial of puberty blockers for children diagnosed with "gender incongruence" to be authorised, having earlier raised 22 grounds for non-acceptance and received responses from KCL.
3. Professor George started work at the MHRA on 5th January 2026.
4. On 11th February 2026 the MHRA sent a letter to the trial sponsor team at KCL, raising serious safety and ethical concerns about the trial and asking for further amendments to the protocol.
5. This was made public on 20th February. According to media reports on 26th February, Professor George played a key role in raising the concerns leading to this letter.²
6. On 25th February Natasha Loder, Health Correspondent at *The Economist*, was encouraged by an informant to look at Dr George's X account for examples of "gender-critical" beliefs. By her account she then took screenshots from his timeline.³ She has since published four of them. They are attached to this letter. They all date from before the closing date for applications for the role.

Post 1: On 29th April 2023 Professor George wrote: "Women's rights are a hard fought right. Many women died for that cause just over a hundred years ago. Society should never allow a militant minority to undermine this. Citizens, wake up and smell the coffee. This affects your mothers, sisters, wives and daughters." By the time the screenshot was taken, it had been viewed 30 times.

Post 2: On 23rd May 2024, Professor George responded to a video of an American Senate committee hearing in which Senator Ted Cruz grilled a Biden judicial nominee who had approved the transfer of a transgender-identifying male child rapist to a women's prison. He wrote: "Absolutely brilliant unmasking of an activist by @SenTedCruz. 'In what universe did you think this was appropriate?!' Women's rights being trampled on by other women. Unbelievable." It had been viewed 21 times.

Post 3: On 1st August 2024 Professor George posted about the high-profile controversy over the International Olympics Committee's decision to permit males with disorders of sex development that had resulted in them wrongly being recorded as female at birth to box in the women's category in the Olympics. He wrote: "@iocmedia you are a disgrace. The denial of biological reality means that women are being put at risk of brain injury because of your nonsensical reckless actions. Shame on you spineless cowards. #istandwithAngelaCarini". It had been viewed 22 times.

Post 4: On 23rd June 2025, Professor George quote-tweeted a long post by JK Rowling with a series of "bullseye" emojis indicating endorsement of her message. That

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mhra-appoints-first-chief-medical-and-scientific-officer>

² <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/health/2026/02/inside-the-decision-to-pause-the-puberty-blocker-trial>

³ <https://x.com/natashaloder/status/2027689535354658828>

quote-tweet had received 122 views by the time it was screenshot. JK Rowling's post said:

"The Sandie Peggie employment tribunal is currently exposing, as perhaps no court case to date has, the issue of class as it relates to the top-down imposition of gender identity ideology in the workplace.

"Diversity officer' Isla Bumba has now admitted in court that she didn't bother consulting the 1992 regulations guaranteeing single-sex spaces when she told a trans-identified male, Dr Beth Upton, to use the female changing room at the hospital where he was working. Bumba justified this decision with comments that I assume sounded really clever and convincing, inside her own head.

"I don't know anything about Beth's body. I didn't at the time. I don't now. I don't need to know. But it wouldn't be something that I would ever have the information of exactly what she is made of, biologically.'

"Kate Searle, a consultant in emergency medicine, backed Bumba up, expressing outrage on the witness stand that anyone would be so insensitive as to ask about Upton's chromosomes.

"I could only imagine how upsetting and invasive a question that would be for Beth, and also not relevant to a colleague to ask another colleague. Beth identifies as female, and it does not matter what her chromosomes are to her.'

"In Bumba and Searle's world, a belief that gender identity trumps biological sex is proof you're intellectually and morally superior to women like Sandie Peggie, so I'd imagine it's come as a shock to discover, in a blaze of public and press scrutiny, just how idiotic and cruel they appear to people outside their dinner party circle.

"When Upton, a 6' tall, 28-year-old ex-rugby playing male, claimed that a petite 50-year-old female nurse was making him feel 'unsafe', his word appears to have been taken as gospel. Searle, Bumba and management fell over themselves to coddle the middle-class doctor who shared their vogueish post-modern views on gender. What did Sandie matter? She's just one of those ghastly uninformed bigots who still thinks sex is real and important - so embarrassingly gauche and simplistic! Whisper it - she probably drinks red wine with chicken, too.

"According to @tribunaltweets, an emotional Searle blurted out on the stand 'I am kind.' This is not something genuinely kind people need to say. Genuinely kind people don't find themselves compelled to explain in court why they helped whip up a witch-hunt against a woman whose only crime was wanting to change her clothes without a man watching.

"Well, the nurse who was supposed to shuffle off in disgrace wasn't having it. Sandie Peggie refused to be sacrificed on the altar of elitist ideologues who believe themselves to be higher and better than she is. She fought back, for herself and for

every other woman who's currently being silenced, persecuted and punished by a smug management class that preens itself on its virtue while imposing rampantly misogynistic policies on its workforce.

"Sandie Peggie is a heroine. The woman NHS Fife thought they could treat abominably without any consequences to themselves has succeeded in shining the brightest spotlight yet upon the brain rot and compassion deficit suffered by supposedly intelligent people when they embrace gender identity ideology. Women everywhere owe her a debt of thanks. Whatever the outcome of this tribunal, Sandie Peggie has already won."

7. *The Times* reports that in other posts, now deleted, he criticised the "well-meaning idiocy" of those in the NHS in denying what he called the "basic biological fact" that sex is set at birth. He praised JK Rowling as a "treasure of our time" when she welcomed the Supreme Court's ruling that the legal definition of a woman should be based on biological sex. And in another post related to Imane Khelif, a male boxer who was permitted to compete as a woman in the most recent summer Olympics, he said "the denial of basic biological fact is concerning".⁴
8. At 4:49 on 27th February 2026, Cathy Newman of Times Radio published "breaking" news on her X feed:

"BREAKING on @TimesRadio: we've unearthed social media posts by a senior officer at the MHRA, the regulator overseeing the puberty blockers trial.

"Posts expressing gender critical views and mocking trans supporters appeared on the X account of Prof Jacob George, MHRA's chief medical and scientific officer, who was only appointed last month"

"His account has now been deleted and the MHRA told us the Prof had been recused from the trial. Stay tuned..."

9. At 5:29 on 27th February Natasha Loder posted on X:

"Finally....in the Pathways Pile-On some serious questions are being asked of @MHRAGovuk about whether its new head of medicine, avowed gender critic, Prof Jacob George ought to have been allowed to get involved with the trial.. His X account has been nuked..."

10. Loder linked to an official statement from MHRA, which said:

"With all clinical trials, the MHRA's top priority is the safety and wellbeing of the trial participants. As part of that commitment, complex clinical trials are kept continuously under review and the MHRA maintains an active scientific dialogue with trial sponsors.

"The MHRA has world-class medical, scientific, and regulatory experts who work as a multidisciplinary team to provide evidence-based decisions on clinical trials. These

⁴ *The Times* [Professor who stopped Pathways puberty blocker trial recused over 'bias'](#) 28th February 2026

experts will continue to meet with King's College London to work through the next steps constructively.

"Following the identification of social media posts made prior to his appointment, Professor Jacob George is recused from further involvement on the Pathways clinical trial as a precaution."

11. Professor George appears to have deleted his X account.
12. Professor George is now unable to work on the regulation of the puberty-blockers trial or to defend himself publicly from charges of "bias" being made in the national newspapers and which his employer has appeared to endorse.
13. Other staff at MHRA will have received the message that they will not be protected by their employer if they come under internal or external attack for expressing views that run counter to gender ideology.

The law

14. The Equality Act 2010 protects employees from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relation to the protected characteristic of belief. Relevant definitions and references to the sections of the Act are included as an annex to this letter.
15. Gender-critical beliefs have been confirmed by the Employment Appeal Tribunal (*Forstater v CGDE [2021] UKEAT 2021*) as being philosophical beliefs covered by Section 10(2). This also applies for the purpose of service provision. This judgment was endorsed by the Supreme Court in *For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers [2025] UKSC*.
16. The *Forstater* case and subsequent case law have established that statements of belief to the following effect, among others, are protected under this definition and are "worthy of respect in a democratic society":
 - a. that, as a matter of scientific fact, sex is biologically immutable
 - b. that there are only two sexes
 - c. that it is impossible to change sex
 - d. that sex matters – in particular that it is important to be able to talk about sex in order to take action against the discrimination, violence and oppression that still affect women and girls because they were born female
 - e. that male individuals who identify as "trans women" are and remain men
 - f. that female individuals who identify as "trans men" are and remain women.
17. This belief is also in line with biology, and with the definition of sex (man/woman, male/female) in UK law, as confirmed by the Supreme Court in *For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers [2025] UKSC*.
18. It has been established by case law that direct discrimination in relation to belief also includes discriminatory action in response to "manifestation" of a protected philosophical belief, such as

a speech act, social-media post or the wearing of a T-shirt or other garment associated with the belief. (See most recently *Higgs v Farmor's School* [2025] EWCA Civ 109.)

19. It has also been established in law that direct discrimination includes “stereotyping” in the context of belief. This is where a decision-maker takes action based on a stereotype that persons who hold or manifest a belief share attributes of a group which they might not in fact possess, for example that individuals expressing gender-critical beliefs are likely to undertake unlawful harassment of or discrimination against people based on the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, or to deny their human rights. (See most recently *Higgs v Farmor's School* [2025] EWCA Civ 109).

Your unlawful acts

20. We would encourage you to take urgent legal advice and consider that:
- a. The MHRA's failure to protect Professor George from obviously baseless allegations by Ms Loder and Ms Newman, and its action in subjecting Dr George to an investigation into social-media posts that date from before his employment and which are not objectively offensive or inappropriate, was **harassment related to belief**.
 - b. Recusing Professor George from working on the puberty-blockers trial as a result of that investigation was **direct discrimination** related to belief.
 - c. If Professor George deleted his X account because of pressure to do so by MHRA (making it difficult for him to defend his reputation as people are now unable to see that his posts are inoffensive), this pressure was **harassment and/or discrimination**.
 - d. Professor George's tweet on 23rd June 2025 concerning Sandie Peggie was a protected act, and any action taken by MHRA in relation to this tweet could also be **victimisation**.
21. The timeline of the investigation into Professor George is not a matter of public record. But if it aligns with Ms Loder's account of receiving a “tip-off” on 25th February and Ms Newman's “breaking” news story on 27th February, it raises serious questions concerning whether, in those two days, MHRA undertook a robust and defensible decision-making process regarding whether and how to respond to the flimsy allegations about Professor George.
22. As well as the precedent-setting case law, we would encourage you to look at the growing body of successful claims in the employment tribunal for belief discrimination. These include *Forstater v CGD*, *Bailey v Garden Court*, *Fahmy v Arts Council England*, *Phoenix v Open University*, *Meade v Westminster CC and Social Work England*, *Adams v Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre* and *Peter Wilkins v DSTL*. The facts of these cases illustrate a pattern that MHRA seems to be repeating, in which employers overreact to ideologically motivated complaints that ordinary and scientific statements about sex and about women's rights are “anti-trans”. Briefings on these cases and links to the judgments are available on Sex Matters' website.⁵

⁵ <https://sex-matters.org/case-briefings/>

23. In the case of *Adams v Edinburgh Rape Crisis* the tribunal's judgment characterised the centre's stance in dogmatically insisting that "trans women are women" as "at the very extreme end of gender identity theory" and concluded that there was "absolutely no need for a rape crisis centre to be seen to take such a stance".⁶ Similarly, there is no need for a medical regulator to take such a stance, which denies biological facts and makes objective decision-making about medical risks and possible benefits impossible. A "fitness to practise" hearing of misconduct after allegations against psychologist Dr Anne Woodhouse, concerning social-media posts expressing gender-critical views, also found there was no case to answer.⁷
24. The disciplinary process at Edinburgh Rape Crisis was described by the employment tribunal as Kafkaesque:
- "It is unfortunately a classic of its kind, somewhat reminiscent of the work of Franz Kafka. The investigation should not have been launched in the first place and was clearly motivated by a strong belief amongst the senior management and some of the claimant's colleagues that the claimant's views were inherently hateful."
25. As someone who has been through a four-year belief-discrimination case against my employer, which set the precedent that gender-critical beliefs are protected, I would not wish such a legal fight on anyone – even though I was ultimately successful and received substantial compensation. Sex Matters has witnessed and documented dozens of similar cases since, in which employers flounder, trying to defend the indefensible.
26. This is a massive waste of public resources and public trust. Rather than risking a long and damaging legal case that would distract both the MHRA and Professor George from the important work of regulating medicines in the UK, the MHRA's leadership now needs urgently to reconsider its rushed decision to recuse Professor George and, by its actions, to give credence to the public accusations of "bias" being made against him.
27. You should recognise that the way you responded was a mistake made under pressure, and take active steps to rebuild the culture of the MHRA and public trust in it as an organisation that stands up for scientific research and integrity for the benefit of patients.

Yours sincerely



Maya Forstater, CEO

cc: Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission

⁶ [Adams v ERCC](#)

⁷ [The Times](#)

Annex I: The X posts

 **Prof Jacob George**
@ProfJacobGeorg1 Follow  

Women’s rights are a hard fought right. Many women died for that cause just over a hundred years ago. Society should never allow a militant minority to undermine this. Citizens, wake up and smell the coffee. This affects your mothers, sisters, wives and daughters

9:35 AM · Apr 29, 2023 · 30 Views

    


SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HOLDS A CONFIRMATION HEARING FOR PENDING JUDICIAL NOMINEES
4:01 

 14K  60K  290K  45M  

 **Prof Jacob George**
@ProfJacobGeorg1 Follow  

Absolutely brilliant unmasking of an activist by @SenTedCruz . “In what universe did you think this was appropriate?!” Women’s rights being trampled upon by other women. Unbelievable

9:08 AM · May 23, 2024 · 21 Views

   1  



Prof Jacob George

@ProfJacobGeorg1

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@iocmedia you are a disgrace. The denial of biological reality means that women are being put at risk of brain injury because of your nonsensical reckless actions. Shame on you spineless cowards
[#istandwithAngelaCarini](#)

12:08 PM · Aug 1, 2024 · 22 Views



Prof Jacob George

@ProfJacobGeorg1

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J.K. Rowling @jk_rowling · Jul 23, 2025

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'Diversity officer' Isla Bumba has now admitted in court that she didn't
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10:05 PM · Jul 23, 2025 · 122 Views





J.K. Rowling
@jk_rowling



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'I don't know anything about Beth's body. I didn't at the time. I don't now. I don't need to know. But it wouldn't be something that I would ever have the information of exactly what she is made of, biologically.'

Kate Searle, a consultant in emergency medicine, backed Bumba up, expressing outrage on the witness stand that anyone would be so insensitive as to ask about Upton's chromosomes.

'I could only imagine how upsetting and invasive a question that would be for Beth, and also not relevant to a colleague to ask another colleague. Beth identifies as female, and it does not matter what her chromosomes are to her.'

In Bumba and Searle's world, a belief that gender identity trumps biological sex is proof you're intellectually and morally superior to women like Sandie Peggie, so I'd imagine it's come as a shock to discover, in a blaze of public and press scrutiny, just how idiotic and cruel they appear to people outside their dinner party circle.

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Sandie Peggie is a heroine. The woman NHS Fife thought they could treat abominably without any consequences to themselves has succeeded in shining the brightest spotlight yet upon the brain rot and compassion deficit suffered by supposedly intelligent people when they embrace gender identity ideology. Women everywhere owe her a debt of thanks. Whatever the outcome of this tribunal, Sandie Peggie has already won.

Last edited 10:03 PM · Jul 23, 2025 · 1.9M Views

1.4K

7.9K

35K

1.8K



Relevant

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Annex I: The law

1. The **Equality Act 2010** Section 13(1) defines **direct discrimination**:

A person (A) discriminates against another (B) if, because of a protected characteristic, A treats B less favourably than A treats or would treat others.

Section 10 defines the protected characteristic of religion or belief:

- (1) Religion means any religion and a reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion.
- (2) Belief means any religious or philosophical belief and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief.
- (3) In relation to the protected characteristic of religion or belief—
 - (a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person of a particular religion or belief;
 - (b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons who are of the same religion or belief.

2. Section 26 (1) defines **Harassment** as

A person (A) harasses another (B) if—

- (a) A engages in unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, and
- (b) the conduct has the purpose or effect of—
 - (i) violating B's dignity, or
 - (ii) creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for B.

3. Section 27 defines **Victimisation** in terms:

(1) A person (A) victimises another person (B) if A subjects B to a detriment because—

- (a) B does a protected act, or
- (b) A believes that B has done, or may do, a protected act.

(2) Each of the following is a protected act—

- (a) bringing proceedings under this Act;
- (b) giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under this Act;
- (c) doing any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with this Act;

(d) making an allegation (whether or not express) that A or another person has contravened this Act.

4. Section 39 provides that in relation to **employees and applicants**

(1) An employer (A) must not discriminate against a person (B)—

(e) in the arrangements A makes for deciding to whom to offer employment;

(f) as to the terms on which A offers B employment;

(g) by not offering B employment.

(2) An employer (A) must not discriminate against an employee of A's (B)—

(a) as to B's terms of employment;

(b) in the way A affords B access, or by not affording B access, to opportunities for promotion, transfer or training or for receiving any other benefit, facility or service;

(c) by dismissing B;

(d) by subjecting B to any other detriment.

(3) An employer (A) must not victimise a person (B)—

(e) in the arrangements A makes for deciding to whom to offer employment;

(f) as to the terms on which A offers B employment;

(g) by not offering B employment.

(4) An employer (A) must not victimise an employee of A's (B)—

(a) as to B's terms of employment;

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