



Harriet Haynes v Paul Thomson and Anna Goodwin (English Blackball Pool Federation chair and secretary)

Male pool player challenges ban from women's category

Jurisdiction: County Court

Sector: Sport

Causes of action: Discrimination

Legal representation: Robin Moira White (counsel), Matt Champ (solicitor)

Decisions: [Harriet Haynes v Paul Thomson and Anna Goodwin K01CT207](#)

Updates: [Live tweet threads of tribunal](#)

Summary of events

In August 2023, three pool organisations – Ultimate Pool Group (UPG), World Eight Ball Federation (WEBF) and England Blackball Pool Federation (EBPF) – announced that their women's events would be for those female at birth. This was a reversal of past self-ID policy. They did this because a trans-identifying male player, Harriet Haynes, was dominating women's events.

In response, Haynes threatened all three with legal action. UPG and WEBF backed down in October 2023, reverting to their previous policy that anyone could self-identify into the women's events. EBPF did not.

Haynes brought a claim for discrimination against EBPF for having refused to amend its rules to let him into its women's events. The claim names the EBPF chair, Paul Thomson, and the secretary, Anna Goodwin.

In a separate case, UPG and WEBF were sued for discrimination by a group of almost 30 women, led by six named players, for their policy reversals. That case was settled in favour of the women in May 2025.

Outcome

The hearing was held from 7th to 11th April 2025. Both sides called expert witnesses who submitted reports. Haynes was represented by a trans-identifying male barrister and called as an expert witness a trans-identifying male academic and footballer, Dr Blair Hamilton. One of the expert witnesses for the defence was Dr Emma Hilton, a developmental biologist and a trustee of Sex Matters.

While the case was being heard, the Supreme Court announced that the judgment in *For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers* would be delivered the following week. The judge then suggested, and both parties agreed, that they would submit written arguments once the Supreme Court had delivered its judgment. This was handed down on 16th April and clarified that "sex" in the Equality Act 2010 means biological sex.

In August 2025 the court dismissed the claim, ruling that Haynes' exclusion from the women's competition was on the basis of biological sex, not gender reassignment.

Sex Matters is a charitable incorporated organisation number 1207701. Our case briefings are introductions to cases that concern the conflict between sex-based rights and policies and practices based on gender identity. Dr Emma Hilton (a trustee of Sex Matters) was acting in her personal capacity. This information was compiled from public sources, last updated 19th March 2026.

The judgment confirms that sports organisers can lawfully exclude trans-identifying males from women's competitions based on biological sex, and that the UK Supreme Court's ruling in *For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers* was determinative. A trans-identifying male, regardless of whether he holds a gender-recognition certificate (GRC), is considered biologically male for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010.

The court rejected arguments based on the Human Rights Act, and stated that any future application for permission to appeal would most likely be refused, as there was no real prospect of success.

Appeal

The claimant Harriet Haynes was initially denied permission to appeal by the trial judge, HHJ Parker, but granted permission by Mr Justice Ritchie at the High Court in March 2026. The case will now be heard at the High Court, date to be determined.