

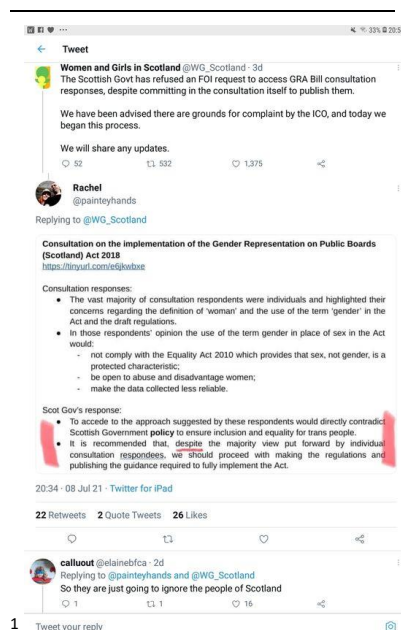
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15 July 2021

## Response to the statement of solidarity with transgender and non-binary people by Sheffield CLPs

We are a group of Labour members who are 'gender critical' – that is, we do not accept the beliefs that gender is more significant than biological sex, that a man can literally become a woman and that 'non binary' is a category which should be accepted in law. It is our view that gender ideology is not progressive; it promotes sexist stereotypes and is deeply homophobic, explicitly non-materialist and anti-scientific. It reflects and perpetuates neoliberal capitalism by promoting a fragmented and impossible to objectively define, individual identity above collective, material experience. In adhering to this ideology, the Labour Party is supporting a well-organised trans lobby which is bank-rolled by tech millionaires and is a profit-making gift to big pharma, as well as to a burgeoning plastic surgery industry. It is also profoundly anti-democratic; there has been a deliberate attempt to slip reforms under the radar without the general public being fully aware of them (please read the [Denton](#) report). It is clear that the Scottish government deliberately ignored the outcome of a consultation on reforms to the Gender Recognition on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018, because it obviously didn't like what it was being told.<sup>1</sup>

The belief that 'transwomen are women, transmen are men and non-binary identities are valid', a central thesis of your statement, are presented by the gender ideology lobby, along with the notion of being 'born in the wrong body', as if it corresponds to an objective reality. However, this is not the case; it is exactly that – a belief – and like any belief system, religious or otherwise, gender ideology should be open to questioning, criticism and evidential analysis, not accepted as a basis for making policy, either within the Labour Party or in any other cultural, social or political field. Surely, we should be questioning the social and cultural conditions in which in less than a decade there has been a 1,460% increase in referrals of boys and a staggering 5,337% increase in girls to the Gender Identity Development Service at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust<sup>2</sup>, many of whom



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.transgendertrend.com/surge-referral-rates-girls-tavistock-continues-rise/>

have other complex mental health problems (including anorexia, trauma and autism), rather than try to shut down all debate?

We abhor discrimination, harassment or violence against any group in society and are deeply shocked that in **your statement** you imply that transphobia must lie behind any disagreement with gender ideology and opposition to reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (GRA), the recently rejected proposals for which would have allowed anyone to identify as the opposite sex without any type of gate-keeping assessment, thereby allowing men who simply say they are women unfettered access to female spaces with no form of redress. Reforms along these lines are being rushed through in many countries (the US, Spain, Canada, certain states in Australia) without any detailed analysis or debate of the consequences for women, children and without even an in-depth understanding (based on evidence rather than ideology) as to what being trans actually is. Many people in the UK may not realise that the trans umbrella adopted by Stonewall encompasses a whole range of differing identities so includes a far larger number of people than the 5,000 or so 'transsexuals' originally intended to be helped by the proposed reforms to the GRA2004. Indeed, many people in the wider community may not realise that the definition of trans includes males who remain surgically and hormonally male but who simply self-identify as female. Furthermore, Stonewall has recently been found to be guilty of offering incorrect advice on the Equality Act in a report commissioned by the University of Essex and as reported [here](#) in the Times newspaper.

Anyone who questions the speed and wisdom of these very fundamental reforms is labelled a bigot or a transphobe, and in many cases subjected to a campaign of vilification which results in reputational damage, possible loss of livelihood and even rape and death threats (as recently experienced by Joanna Cherry of the SNP). Indeed, only recently, women protesting at the presence of a naked man in a spa in Los Angeles (a self-identifying 'woman with a penis') were attacked by Antifa activists, and feminists who demonstrated against the reforms proposed in Spain required several busloads of riot police to protect them against transactivists (one woman had to be hospitalised). This stifling of debate is not only anti-democratic, it is damaging for society and for trans people themselves, especially those who transition and later come to regret that decision. It is deeply concerning to us from child safeguarding viewpoint that the discourse is shifting to blame the child for looking at a man's genitals in a female only space rather than questioning why those genitals are in that space in the first place.

It is bewildering and very wounding that when we speak up with our concerns we are rejected by people on the left of the Labour Party as bigots. We are a part of the left. We have been activists over very many years on a range of radical causes and within the Labour Party, campaigning alongside you. Do you suddenly believe us to be reactionary? Must we now be silenced? Subjected to the most stringent party discipline? Might it not have been worth pausing before sending out your statement (with no specific background as to the 'incident' which triggered it, therefore providing no context or evidence for the claims being made) or to have considered, even for a moment, why very valued party members are taking a different position to your own?

Is debate not something we stand for on the left? And respect for differing points of view?

To not share the belief system that is gender ideology is **not** transphobic, as the recent Maya Forstater appeal verdict made clear (<https://sex-matters.org/posts/updates/gender-critical-beliefs-are-worthy-of-respect-in-a-democratic-society/>). To reject gender ideology is not equivalent to criticising or not accepting trans people and does not undermine the rights that trans people have – let us be absolutely clear that no one is seeking to remove any rights from any group; we are standing up for women's existing sex-based rights and acknowledge that where there may be a conflict of rights, we need a debated solution, not an imposed dictact which we believe undermines women's autonomy and the right to define ourselves as women. We understand that it can be tough

to be a trans person. People are not always kind and men can be violent. We are against all forms of discrimination and believe in the right of everyone to live a life free from discrimination and harassment.

As women, we face entrenched, structural inequality on the basis that we are biologically female. This is evident in the sexual and domestic violence that women and girls suffer, in the 'gender' pay gap, in sexual harassment and discrimination at work, and much more. And this is why, rightly, sex is one of the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 (along with sexual orientation and gender reassignment). We need female-only safe spaces now more than ever – we must preserve them. We must also preserve female sports. Do you believe it is fair for Laurel Hubbard (a transwoman) to compete in women's weightlifting at the Olympics – with such physical advantages? Or for women to be injured by transwomen when playing sports such as rugby or boxing? Furthermore, one of the most vulnerable communities in our society – female prisoners – are increasingly in danger from self-identifying males being admitted to women's prisons. Reports that approximately half the male prisoners identifying as women are sex offenders<sup>3</sup> are indicative of a worrying trend that requires research and investigation, not dismissal. Obviously, this is not saying that all trans people are sexual predators, but women are at risk from men, and unfortunately trans identifying males in prisons can and do commit sexual offences against women when housed in the female estate, given (as we have established) that being a 'transwoman' does not require that a male has had surgery to remove his penis. You claim trans rights do not conflict with women's rights, but clearly there is a conflict here. Further information can be found [here](#).

We are especially concerned about the impact of gender ideology on children. Children are being sold a lie when they are told they can 'become' the other sex, and an increasing number of detransitioners (young people who have stopped taking cross sex hormones) are very angry that they were led believe this and that they were not given the chance to explore themselves more deeply before taking as momentous a decision as to take puberty blockers (which have permanent effects and most often lead to full medical transition<sup>4</sup>). It is the gender ideology lobby that insists children should be immediately 'affirmed' as 'transgender' if they declare they are trans. Any exploration of wider issues (such as trauma, sexuality, the impact of autism) transactivists say is 'conversion therapy' and should be banned. We disagree strongly. We believe the affirmation approach is harmful to children. The left should be speaking out and saying so.

Nor should the left stand by while lesbians are being told that they are transphobic if they don't want to date someone with a penis. Gays and lesbians in the new orthodoxy are told they must be 'same gender attracted' not 'same sex'. This is homophobic. The lesbians amongst our number, can categorically state that we are same SEX attracted. Our sexuality does not extend to males, however they identify. Many young lesbians seeking partners on dating sites are subjected to self-identifying 'lesbians with a penis' who are pushing at the 'cotton ceiling'<sup>5</sup> and claiming lesbians are transphobic for not wanting to sleep with them. This is deeply lesbophobic and misogynistic.

Finally, your statement is full of unevidenced statements. Obviously, we believe that being progressive and committed to equality and justice requires that we should not dismiss the struggles of any minority group when they claim to face hate or to speak about the discrimination and difficulties they face. To make such strong assertions about hate crime, however, without any evidence is not helpful to a debate on these issues and is a statistic presented in a vacuum. We would welcome further debate. To assert an 81% increase in 'hate crime', for instance, is a

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<sup>3</sup> <https://fairplayforwomen.com/transgender-prisoners/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.transgendertrend.com/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://medium.com/@mirandayardley/girl-dick-the-cotton-ceiling-and-the-cultural-war-on-lesbians-and-women-c323b4789368>

statement that requires a great deal of unpicking, a workable definition of 'hate crime' (does this statistic include the 'literal violence' of misgendering, for example?) and an understanding that some police forces have been recording 'non hate crime' incidents as though they were such.

Silencing is not the answer to the conflict that exists between the expansion of trans rights and the upholding of women's sex-based right. Please work with us to promote greater openness and discussion around these issues. We welcome your response.

Anyone requiring further information can contact us via the email address at the top of this statement.

Nicky Cowan, Sheffield Central CLP

Judith Dodds, ex Sheffield Central CLP

Tracey Smith, Sheffield Central CLP

Anon, Sheffield Heeley CLP

Julia South, Sheffield Heeley CLP

Terry Barrow, Stocksbridge and Penistone CLP

Anne Phipps, Stocksbridge and Penistone CLP

Anon, Sheffield Hallam CLP

Lisa Markham, Sheffield Hallam CLP tbc

Anon, ex Sheffield Hallam CLP tbc

Plus others who contributed to this discussion but are too afraid to put their names to the response for fear of recrimination, which we feel is something the Party should be deeply ashamed of.

### ***Some direct questions and comments on your statement***

*We are coming together as Labour members concerned about the rise of transphobia in Sheffield, across the UK and internationally, to affirm our solidarity with all transgender and non-binary people in their struggle for justice, equality and liberation.*

***Where is the evidence of the rise in transphobia in all of those locations? What does this struggle for justice, equality and liberation comprise? What justices and liberations are being sought that do not already exist?***

***\*\*Background\*\****

Transgender people are systematically subjected to appalling social and political conditions in our own country and beyond.

***Where is the evidence for this? In fact, the UK is known and recognised to be one of the safest countries in the world to be openly trans. There have been no murders of trans people in the UK for at least two years, and the current political narrative being pushed by many institutions is to centre trans people in every policy development and initiative. This does not feel like political oppression.***

In 2019, hate crimes against transgender and non-binary people recorded by police in the UK increased by a staggering 81%.

***What constitutes a 'hate crime' in these cases? Is this down to 'perception' and do we have a workable, objective definition of hate crime in such cases? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48756370>***

Transgender people are also disproportionately affected by homelessness, poverty and domestic violence. Every year sees more trans people die while waiting for access to medical treatment that they desperately need.

***Again, where is the evidence for this assertion? NHS waiting lists are at record levels for every kind of life-saving treatment, including cancer and heart disease, as a result of years of Tory underinvestment, ideologically driven austerity programmes and more recently the added pressure of Covid19. Where is the evidence that those seeking surgery for medical transition are at greater risk of death caused by increased waiting times than any other section of society awaiting life-saving treatment from killer diseases? In addition to this, what is the evidence-based, medical diagnosis upon which those seeking such treatment is being based, given that there is a great deal of debate and questioning even amongst trans people themselves an agreed diagnosis of 'gender dysphoria' such as when applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate?***

Sheffield has long been recognised as a city which values inclusion and is a city of sanctuary, and it is important that we uphold those values through our support for trans and non-binary people.

***We agree 100%.***

***\*\*Statement\*\****

We recognise that trans women are women, trans men are men and non-binary people are non-binary.

***People are entitled to disagree, and many thousands, possibly millions, do disagree, based on objective science. We believe that a woman is an adult human female and that sex is distinct from gender identity and is rooted in biology. This is a belief deemed, as a result of the Maya Forstater case, worthy of respect in a civilised society and that no woman should be persecuted, vilified, silenced or otherwise harassed because of that belief.***

We are committed to proactively working to make the Labour Party a welcoming, comfortable and safe space for trans and non-binary people. The NEC statement\* reiterating the right of trans women to access women's shortlists (this is quite possibly illegal), roles and spaces within the Labour Party, as well as their commitment to "reforming the Gender Recognition Act and Equality Act 2010 to ensure that they protect trans people", is an important basis for this work.

***Members who disagree with these policies are entitled to express their disagreement and have their reasons heard. This is an important part of the assessment of pro and cons in policy-making and it is important that all viewpoints are held, and Equality Impact Assessments are made when considering the introduction of policies which will have a knock-on effect on other protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.***

However, there is much more to be done. This means taking every opportunity to voice support for trans identities, promote education about transgender equality within our CLPs and Labour networks, and stand alongside transgender people through campaigning and demonstrating as part of their fight for liberation.

***We are interested in what 'liberation' means in this context. It's a powerful and emotive word, and fighting for liberation implies there is currently none, or it is limited. What rights, for example, do trans people not have currently that you are asserting they should have?***

It also means challenging transphobic statements and attitudes when we see them. What is meant by transphobic statements? Where necessary, this may include taking disciplinary action when members violate our Code of Conduct by seeking to discriminate, harass or disadvantage anybody on the basis of their gender - including self-identified genders - whether within the Party or in wider society.

***This statement is chilling and deeply concerning. We are all aware of, have witnessed, and indeed been subject ourselves, to censure, complaint, discipline or silencing within the party for trying to assert our legal, polite and evidence-based views on women's sex-based rights, and how it is far too easy for the party to latch on to false allegations of transphobia and discrimination which can have devastating impacts on the reputation and freedom of expression of those of us who do not agree with the dominant discourse of the gender ideologues. You should be looking to protect ALL members who wish to express their views, but instead you are looking to protect a minority of members from disadvantage on the basis of something – 'gender' – that has no legal definition, no legal protections, is subjectively defined and cannot be scientifically proven. Is this really what you mean?***

Given the extremely hostile social and political situation that they face, it is our collective responsibility to reach out to trans members, role holders and political candidates to offer them additional support and safety measures. It is also our collective responsibility to resist any attempts to exclude trans people from labour movement single-sex spaces.

***It is interesting that you wish to provide self-identifying trans people with additional support and safety but have nothing to say about the protection of women and lesbians from misogyny and lesbophobia which is rampant within the party. Single-sex spaces, including All Women***

***Shortlists, are a right enshrined in law and this statement goes against that legal requirement. Women have a right to self-organise in single sex spaces, within political parties and in wider society, and there are rights of exclusion from those spaces enshrined in the EA2010 even from another protected characteristic, gender reassignment, in order to protect the dignity and safety of women and girls. Gender identity has no legal right of protection, and self-identification is not law. The Labour Party is running ahead of the law on this matter, and this statement leaves the party wide open to legal challenge.***

Any movement hoping to restrict the rights of trans and non-binary people restricts the rights of cisgender\*\* ('cis') people too.

***What is the proof of this? Many members strongly object to the word 'cis'. Indeed, 'cis' is a chemistry term and has no meaning outside of science but has become a term to divide the female sex class into natal and trans women, thereby making women a subset of our own biological sex class. We reject the term 'cis'. It has no place in law. Neither does 'non-binary'; non-binary is simply a means of an individual wishing to claim s/he has no biological sex, when each and every individual human being, all animals and most plant life on this planet is either male or female – binary. Dimorphic. Furthermore, please provide evidence of what movements are trying to restrict the rights of trans and non-binary people and in what way.***

We reject the notion that there is a conflict between the rights of cis and trans women.

***You may reject that notion, but it is clear and recognised as part of the consultation on the GRA reforms and many other cultural fields – including sport, prisons, sexual violence refuges, All Women Shortlists, single-sex facilities – that there is a clear conflict between self-identification and single-sex spaces. Saying and claiming there is not does not, and dismissing it as a mere 'notion', make that conflict disappear, and addressing it requires discussion, debate and creative solutions that meet the needs of all parties.***

Instead we are clear that sex-based rights and gender-based rights for everyone are advanced when trans people are recognised as a central and fundamental part of all communities and groups.

***Central/fundamental? Why this group and not every person? By anyone's definition, trans people are and always will be a minority. Are you asserting that women, as 51% of the population, should always be a central and fundamental part of all communities and groups? If not, why not?***