

**Written Evidence submitted by Jane Allsopp
(DIV0107)**

I write to you not as a constituent - I live in West Somerset - but in your capacity as chair of the Science and Technology Committee. I was alarmed and angry when I watched the testimony given to the STC by Katharine Birbalsingh last Wednesday, and while I am sure that many other people have made known to you their similar concerns, including, I hope, some of those in relevant, senior positions, I hope my own informal statement to you in this letter will enable you to realise how I came to be so alarmed at the quality of the evidence which Ms Birbalsingh gave to you, and angry at the deplorably low level of effort that she demonstrated in preparing her evidence, and at her apparent ignorance of significant data over the last fifty years, for which actions she must be held accountable.

I speak with the viewpoint of someone with a scientific education (degree in pharmacology and PhD in physiology), and qualified as a secondary school teacher; I speak with the experience of having been a university lecturer in initial teacher training and also as a recently retired headteacher of a Hackney comprehensive. When I qualified as a teacher in 1981, I became aware of the published research into gender and science - as a young woman, I had also my own lived experience. I taught years of teacher trainees, more than a thousand, most of them to be primary teachers, who also studied this evidence.

For Ms Birbalsingh not to have cited any of this evidence made me wonder if she was traducing the results of those researchers, since what possible reason could she have for ignoring it, other than simply not having prepared herself by reading and research? In my view, this is essential not specially for the STC, but for the young people who she is responsible for, and whose voice she is meant to represent in her social mobility role. To foreground merely her own opinions, in opposition to the outcomes of so much validated research, and in opposition to the experience of so many people, women and men, is surely not what the STC expects, and it is not what I, as a citizen, expect from your expert witnesses.

So I am alarmed at the significance that your committee members may attach to Ms Birbalsingh's testimony, and therefore end my letter, which I have kept as brief as I can, without citing all that research, which I am sure has already been delivered to you, by asking you if you are sufficiently convinced by arguments like mine to revisit the item on last week's agenda, and to try again to garner seriously considered summaries of the matter, and a wider representation of current experience. I only wish I was still in my school as a headteacher - I would have invited all of the committee to visit and to talk with our young people, and with our science teachers and me.

Please let me know what actions you are going to take with regard to the evidence you did not receive last week from Ms Birbalsingh, and also, how she is being held to account for what she said then, and what she did not say. At the very least, this has been a very poor use of public money.

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