

## **LGB Alliance—written evidence (FON0054)**

### **House of Lords Communications and Digital Select Committee inquiry: The future of news: impartiality, trust and technology**

LGB Alliance is pleased to present our ideas and recommendations on this important subject.

We believe that the experience of LGB Alliance represents the most extreme example of routine disinformation and bias in the media on sex and gender issues. We will therefore focus on our experience as a new charity (charitable status conferred 2021) which campaigns for lesbian, gay and bisexual rights and for freedom of speech, most notably on sex and gender issues. **In line with this focus, we will respond only to those questions that are most relevant to this specific experience.**

It is our belief that all the facts and news about LGB Alliance have been intentionally suppressed and/or misrepresented ever since we founded in 2019 not just by the left-leaning media but also in sources that much of the public goes to for what they may assume is impartial information: the BBC, Thomson Reuters Foundation,<sup>1 2</sup> and Wikipedia. The reason is that we are challenging an orthodoxy that has spread across all areas of news – in the UK and internationally. **Since we believe we have unique insights to share on this matter, we would welcome the opportunity to give evidence at one of the Committee's Oral Hearings on our experience.**

#### **About LGB Alliance**

LGB Alliance was formed in October 2019 in response to the decision of Stonewall, once itself an LGB rights campaigning organisation, to **ban any discussion** on issues of sex and gender and how they relate to lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Specifically, there were serious concerns about Stonewall's unqualified adoption and promotion of the belief that everyone has a "gender identity" – a concept about which there is no scientific consensus – as separate and sometimes different from, and crucially **overriding**, biological sex. We refer to this belief as "gender identity dogma/theory". LGB Alliance believes that gender identity dogma reinforces outdated and regressive stereotypes, in a way that is having a particularly harmful effect on "gender non- conforming" young people, especially teenage girls.

We would like to see a world where any boy or girl, man or woman, can express themselves as they like as long as they respect the rights of others.

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<sup>1</sup> [Letter to Yasir Khan, Thomson Reuters.pdf \(dropbox.com\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> ['Impartial' news organisations are failing to practise what they preach \(telegraph.co.uk\)](#)

## Coordinated attack

LGB Alliance has been under coordinated attack in the media since our very first meeting – simply because we assert that biological sex is binary and immutable, and that homosexuality is same-sex sexual orientation.

These are heretical assertions for those who promote the belief that everyone has a gender identity and men really can “become” women and vice versa simply by virtue of their strong conviction or desire. The attacks began on X/Twitter the night of our first meeting “LGB Alliance is a hate group – pass it on”.

At that time we had not yet issued a single statement: indeed, we were just two lesbians in the process of setting up a steering group. Yet we were deemed a “hate group” for simply focusing on the promotion of LGB rights – exactly as Stonewall had done previously. These attacks continued and spread from global social media to global mainstream media. TV channels, magazines, radio stations, online news and newspapers all joined in by endorsing increasingly wild defamatory statements. As we made progress and celebrated notable achievements, many news channels simply opted to completely ignore all LGB Alliance news.

In June 2021 Stonewall, the Good Law Project, Mermaids, LGBT Consortium and other QT+ (Queer, Trans, and other (?)) organisations challenged the charitable status of LGB Alliance. A year later, and after £250k of legal costs raised through a crowdfunder, this challenge was dismissed and LGB Alliance won the case.<sup>3</sup>

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We wholeheartedly agree with the Committee’s view that:  
*“A healthy news ecosystem is vital to our democratic society.”*

It is vital that there is a return to impartiality and fact checking in what are regarded as news sources. We are especially concerned with the behaviour of the BBC – where it is clear that QT+ staff have had a direct influence on output – as explained by Cath Leng, who worked at the BBC for 20 years.<sup>4</sup> The BBC has been unable to resist pressure to push an agenda that, in our view, is actually harmful to homosexuals, to children, and to women. We will provide evidence below.

Equally, it is remarkable that the media regulator Ofcom has itself abandoned its obligation to practise and promote impartiality and was rebuked by the Information Commissioner’s Office for doing so.<sup>5</sup> For Ofcom, the highly controversial views of Stonewall represent their default position on thinking about issues affecting LGB people. So much so, that they continue to enter Stonewall’s annual “Workplace Equality Index”. This index, which is advertised as “the definitive benchmarking tool for employers to measure their progress on lesbian, gay, bi and trans inclusion in the workplace” is nothing of the sort. It promotes some sorts of inclusion while discouraging others. It is fair to say it measures how far an organisation is prepared to go in promoting gender identity dogma. For

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<sup>3</sup> <https://lgballiance.org.uk/historic-win-for-lgb-alliance/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://x.com/leng\\_cath/status/1719337550836367376?s=20](https://x.com/leng_cath/status/1719337550836367376?s=20)

<sup>5</sup> [Information Commissioner strikes down secrecy of Stonewall scheme - Sex Matters \(sex-matters.org\)](https://www.sex-matters.org/information-commissioner-strikes-down-secrecy-of-stonewall-scheme)

example, organisations are awarded points for abandoning “gendered language” such as “girls and boys” (apparently “learners” is to be preferred; as in “Come along, learners!”) or “pregnant women” (the NHS now refers to “pregnant employees”). This is the tip of the iceberg but indicative of the language changes Stonewall is urging all members of its programme to implement -- without any public discussion taking place.<sup>6</sup>

## **RESPONSE TO INQUIRY**

### **Trends over the next 12 months and 5 years**

#### **2. *How is generative AI affecting news media business models and how might this evolve?***

AI models trained on a large data corpus, with human-tuned guardrails on top, risk compounding any pre-existing publication bias within the data rather than averaging out biases at scale.

For example, Wikipedia content is a significant part of the data corpus, but it is biased by the social and geographic makeup of its editors, who share many of the same social characteristics as those producing the media sources it relies upon.

The result of AI trained and tuned with inherent bias will operate to the detriment of any minority view that has been excluded or marginalised at an earlier stage. As such, any AI-driven moderation, content generation or fact-checking service employed to cut costs and meet business needs at scale risks invisibly marginalising or even impugning such viewpoints.

#### **3. *How are perceptions of due impartiality evolving and what challenges do news organisations face around impartial reporting?***

Impartiality requires editorial decisions that take account of the risk of ideological bias and resolutely resist it.

With 24/7 reporting on both traditional and new media, uncorroborated information is often presented with little time or inclination for fact-checking. Even if “facts” are “checked”, the sources used may themselves be inaccurate or biased. (Wikipedia being a woeful case in point). This has led to a general lowering of expectations in the quality of news and increased scepticism and even cynicism amongst the general public.

The following feeds the perception that many mainstream news broadcasters appear incapable of -- or unwilling to practise -- impartiality:

- Events and issues that are hotly debated on social media platforms or reported through non-traditional channels, e.g. YouTube, X/Twitter, Mumsnet are often ignored by traditional news channels –

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/nhs-abuse-policy-puts-women-at-risk-mq5q578cr>

especially in relation to views that challenge gender identity dogma

- On the rare occasions that such stories are covered they are placed in deep sections of the online platform or not indexed so as to make them harder to find
- Crucially, editorial processes are influenced by strong internal staff networks and corporate membership of diversity schemes
- Stonewall's "no debate" policy takes the form of refusing to share a platform with those who take an opposing view. This leads to cancellations of panel discussions. Radio 4 and Newsnight have both cancelled items when Stonewall refuses to appear alongside representatives of LGB Alliance or Fair Play for Women for example
- Labyrinthine complaint procedures and/or dismissive treatment of complaints discourage consumers from giving feedback
- All news providers are aware of the power of the mob. When David Bridle of *Boyz* magazine suggested that his readers might find it interesting to watch an LGB Alliance discussion between gay men of the impact of gender identity beliefs on their lives, opponents organised an advertising boycott with devastating effect.<sup>7</sup>

#### **4. What factors affect trust in news and how might this evolve?**

Trust is linked to issues around perception of due impartiality. Editorial decisions at the BBC, the Guardian and other mainstream media have been heavily influenced by the insistence by Stonewall and other TQ+ groups that there must be "no debate" on the prioritisation of "gender identity". The emerging scandal of the medicalisation of "gender non-conforming" children is largely ignored by the mainstream media. To those who have studied these issues with growing alarm, this silence is incomprehensible and has led to a general mistrust of the mainstream media, especially the BBC.<sup>8 9</sup>

This silence by the national broadcaster is bias by omission. Recent examples include the complete absence of mention of a very hotly contested Government consultation on proposals to amend the Gender Recognition Act, limited coverage of Professor Jo Phoenix's decisive victory in her employment tribunal case against the Open University, with little visibility of it on the online platform, and limited coverage of the extraordinary case involving Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre.

The glaring absence of reporting by, most notably, the Guardian and the BBC, of certain stories that are "trending" in other media outlets or social media platforms is particularly corrosive to trust if the level of reporting is consistently out of alignment with other news outlets. As noted, this bias has undermined the

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<sup>7</sup> Source, Graham Linehan, *Tough Crowd*, p. 206.

<sup>8</sup> [https://x.com/MockKing\\_J/status/1756296754486559216?s=20](https://x.com/MockKing_J/status/1756296754486559216?s=20)

<sup>9</sup> [Cath Leng on X: "This is how interested the BBC has been in covering 'conversion therapy' - most of these are from '23, '22 and '21. There were more, I stopped for time. Suddenly - interest drops when it comes to the Lords debate or what Kemi Badenoch says. Convince me there's no agenda. https://t.co/FfLnvG4fEp" / X \(twitter.com\)](https://t.co/FfLnvG4fEp)

confidence of much of the public, especially women alive to issues of sex and gender, in the BBC. Particularly extraordinary has been recent failure to report on important statements and debates on proposals to ban “gender identity conversion Practices.”<sup>10 11 12</sup>

Those responsible for editorial decisions need to go much farther than making assurances of a commitment to impartiality. Impartiality is really hard in today’s media climate. It requires immense strength of purpose and courage to stand against bullying staff networks.

**It is our belief that many editorial boards lack those qualities, and those who appoint them are not looking for those qualities.**

The BBC has not only ignored important issues but frequently spreads **disinformation, even to children. A notorious example that remained online for about a year in spite of hundreds of complaints was a programme aimed at schoolchildren teaching them there are over 100 “genders”. This leads us to ask: who is in charge of such editorial decisions?**<sup>13</sup> **The newly-appointed “Disinformation Correspondent” immediately displayed embarrassing bias, suggesting that the concept of disinformation is not understood at the BBC.**<sup>14</sup>

BBC has an “LGBT & Identity Unit” and yet its reporting is embarrassingly skewed towards positive reporting of those who support gender identity dogma and ignoring – or sometimes making derogatory remarks about – those who challenge it.<sup>15 16 17</sup> This in turn affects overall trust in news media as less resourced and possibly openly biased organisations that fill the gap are more prone to disinformation.<sup>18</sup>

The perceptions of bias above in relation to the BBC are particularly corrosive to public trust levels due to the organisation’s position as national broadcaster with a strong duty of due impartiality. It is hugely disturbing that the BBC appear to be pushing a particular agenda. The BBC’s bias was studied in episodes of the carefully-researched series on the influence of Stonewall by the Northern Ireland BBC broadcaster Stephen Nolan.<sup>19</sup> This is a shameful position for BBC and other public service broadcasters (e.g. C4C) to be in – they have the resources and experience to report current interest topics in a balanced and open way but shy away from it.

Actions needed to address shortcomings:

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001w6vh/house-of-lords-09022024>  
<sup>11</sup> [https://x.com/leng\\_cath/status/1749494540367491501?s=20](https://x.com/leng_cath/status/1749494540367491501?s=20) <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/01/22/bbc-voice-of-righteousness-cause-bias/>  
<sup>12</sup> [https://x.com/leng\\_cath/status/1756291583505313866?s=20](https://x.com/leng_cath/status/1756291583505313866?s=20)  
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/bbc-films-teach-children-of-100-genders-or-more-7xdbg97p>  
<sup>14</sup> <https://twitter.com/mariannaspring/status/1556911930090180608>  
<sup>15</sup> <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-bbc-gets-new-orders-back-trans-rights-ignore-women/>  
<sup>16</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/brand/p09yjmph>  
<sup>17</sup> [BBC accused of giving Pride group ‘too much power’ over content \(thetimes.co.uk\)](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/brand/p09yjmph)  
<sup>18</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/01/08/4m-davie-facing-revolt-transgender-pride-network-policing-bbc/>  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001w6vh/house-of-lords-09022024conversion>  
<sup>19</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/brand/p09yjmph>

- Strengthening editorial processes to ensure balance and leaving ideology at the door
- Structural processes to for the periodic investigation and elimination of undue ideological influences
- Simplified internal complaints procedures and greater responsiveness to complaints by the public.

**Above all, what is needed is the recruitment of editors and other leaders with the courage to carry through a commitment to impartiality beyond mere lip service.**

## **Evaluation**

### ***2. How adequately are UK news organisations providing impartial and trusted news? What actions are needed to address any shortcomings?***

As stated above, many UK news organisations have shown themselves to be consistently biased over the last few years and are less trusted than ever before.

Both OFCOM and IPSO must take steps to dissociate themselves from any lobby groups or special interest groups like Stonewall. They must ensure that staff networks have no influence on editorial work or the culture of the organisation. They must avoid the adoption of flags, badges, lanyards or language that conveys allegiance to one preferred set of ideas over another. All staff must be trained in what impartiality means, and that if an employee seeks to spread a particular worldview via their work they should find employment elsewhere – somewhere impartiality is not required.

### ***3. How adequately are news media organisations ensuring that efforts to provide trusted information and tackle disinformation do not alienate some sections of society in the process?***

Many media organisations are making no effort at all to avoid alienating some sections of society. Decisions appear to have been made at the highest levels to ensure that Stonewall's TQ+ view of the world is prioritised. The views of lesbians, gays and bisexuals who reject gender identity dogma are low down the list of priorities and very rarely represented – if at all.

### ***4. How well is regulatory oversight working? Are any changes needed, for example:***

#### ***a) In the way Ofcom oversees due impartiality and the extent of its remit?***

Changes are definitely needed. As described above, Ofcom is not fit for purpose. Its staff have no understanding of the meaning of impartiality and need urgent training in their important responsibilities. Ofcom should discontinue its

participation in the Stonewall annual Workplace Equality Index and accept that the Equality Act should be used to assist *all* protected characteristics and not just those who fall into the category of "gender reassignment".

**5. *Are there any actions the Government should take to address concerns around due impartiality, trust, and the influence of technology platforms?***

Yes: first, changes to Ofcom and IPSO as stated above. Second, all media organisations must be reminded of their obligations to provide impartial news using facts rather than opinion and ideology.

Technology platforms – the majority of which are based within 30 miles of San Francisco Bay Area – must be told that the law most relevant to content on sex and gender in the UK is the Equality Act. Gender identity is not a protected characteristic and US or Chinese owned technology companies need to reassess the way their platforms are monitored and mediated to ensure they are compliant with UK law.

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