The Supreme Court Gender Ruling: Sheffield's Response



NEWS 9 MAY 2025

On Wednesday the 16th of April, the UK supreme court ruled unanimously that a woman is legally defined only by their biological sex, altering the 2010 Equality Act. As a result, certain establishments may be able to restrict transgender, non-binary and intersex individuals to use single-sex toilets, changing rooms or compete in sports events for their gender among hindering other services these individuals can access. This stemmed from a political debate in Scotland, but now can have a large impact on both women and the transgender community in the UK.

Following the Supreme Court ruling, a number of protests around the country were held on April 19th, with thousands in attendance in Westminster against the decision.

Similarly, a demonstration held in front of Sheffield's Town Hall was attended by hundreds of pro-Trans+ activists, in solidarity with the queer community.

The crowd, including students, members of the public, local organisations and others, came together for several hours, chanting, holding placards and listening to a variety of speakers. One student we have spoken to called the demonstration "uplifting" and a "small glimmer of hope when we all feel so alone and so frightened".

Whilst a small contingent of Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs) also appeared in counter-protest to disrupt proceedings, the half-dozen were overwhelming outnumbered, and moved on, to chants of 'No TERFs on our turf' from the crowd.

The University of Sheffield's LGBTQ+ society also joined in the city's protest, having their own walkdown to the Town Hall so all students attending could feel safe and supported before, during and after the event. In a statement made on social media on Friday the 19th of April, the society collectively declared "We firmly disagree with the transphobic, anti-science result of the hearing" and they "recognise this as another attack on both the rights and the safety of our community". Although this can reassure all students that they still have a safe space to express themselves as the gender they identify as in university, the ruling could have wider implications in terms of the transgender community receiving financial, mental health and healthcare support in the UK which is a very worrying reality for the transgender community across the country.

Nationally, Protesters gathered in 30 cities across the country over the same weekend, including Cardiff, Manchester, London and Brighton. Activists were seen waving placards saying "Trans Liberation" and "Trans Rights Now". The "Emergency Demo" outside the Houses of Parliament was supported by activism groups such as Trans Kids Deserve Better, Pride in Labour, the Front for the Liberation of Intersex Non-binary and Transgender people (Flint) and TransActual.

Many well-known celebrities publicly spoke out against the Supreme Court ruling. *Derry Girls* and *Bridgerton* star Nicola Coughlan posted an Instagram Story saying "You're not fighting for women's rights. You don't speak for me. Bigotry is bigotry." The actor also announced she was raising money for Not a Phase, a UK-based trans charity. She also shared two different posts opposing JK Rowling's financial contribution and support of the For Women Scotland movement. Jake Shears of the band *Scissor Sisters*, *Heartstopper* star Joe Locke and Coughlan's *Bridgerton* co-start Golda Rosheuvel have also engaged with this charity following the ruling.

Olivia Blake, the Minister of Parliament for Sheffield Hallam in a statement released to Forge Press, confirmed that "I wholeheartedly support the right of transgender people to live and thrive as the gender they identify with. Trans women are women and trans men are men". She also believes that "the Supreme Court ruling raises more questions than it resolves", acknowledging the "inequalities" the transgender community already face will be made even worse as a result of this. Ms Blake also spoke out about these beliefs in the House of Commons and wishes to reassure her constituents that she "will continue to raise questions of government about how to protect the rights of transgender community". Forge Press did contact the other Sheffield MP's however they declined to comment on this issue.

Image credit: PA Media

Charley Sands (she/her), Sophie Layton (she/her)

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