

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP  
Minister for Women and Equalities  
Women and Equalities Unit  
Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2AS

Dear Bridget,

### **EHRC Code of Practice**

I am writing to you as the Leader of the Southwark Liberal Democrats, where we are home to one of the largest LGBTQ+ communities in the country. In late 2023, we passed a unanimous motion to stand in solidarity with the trans community. Here, the reaction to the EHRC code of practice has been one of dismay, fear, and alarm.

Whilst the Supreme Court Ruling felt like a step backwards, there remained a small hope that a way forward could be found by changing the law in order to preserve the dignity and safety of one of the most marginalised communities in the country. Instead, the EHRC code of practice is unworkable at best, and exclusionary and dangerous at worst.

The Government's own impact assessment found disproportionate harm to trans people, with trans people being excluded both from spaces that align with their sex assigned at birth as well as their gender identity. It effectively is a bar from public life. The guidance is also in conflict with the Gender Recognition Act 2004 which explicitly states, "Where a full gender recognition certificate is issued to a person, the person's gender becomes for all purposes the acquired gender". It further violates the Equality Act 2010, forcing trans people to out themselves in the workplace and public life, despite sex reassignment being a protected characteristic.

For this guidance to take effect during Pride month – which is celebrated loudly and proudly in Southwark – feels particularly offensive.

We urgently need the Government to step forward to protect this community – it must legislate to update the Equality Act in order to provide the clarity and protection for trans people that the courts and EHRC are fundamentally unable to give.

I am therefore urging you to:

- Immediately withdraw the EHRC Code of Practice
- Pass updated legislation formed on a cross-party basis, with meaningful input from the trans community, charities, and LGBTQ+ businesses
- Take action to ensure that trans people have equal access to healthcare by cutting waiting lists for treatment and improving access to medication

Yours sincerely,



**Councillor Victor Chamberlain**  
Southwark Liberal Democrat Group Leader