



**The Voice of lesbian, gay, bisexual  
and trans members in the PCS Union**  
% PCS Equality Dept.  
160 Falcon Road  
London  
SW11 2LN  
proud@pcs.org.uk

9 July 2018

Mr Mark Serwotka

PCS  
160 Falcon Road  
London  
SW11 2LN

Dear Mark,

As the elected representative body of LGBT members in PCS, we are writing to you to express our concerns in regards to the open letter published in the Morning Star on Wednesday 4th July (Improving the climate of debate around the proposed changes to the Gender Recognition Act) to which you were a listed signatory.

Following the publication of this article, we received contact from numerous members of Proud and PCS expressing their disappointment, hurt and anger that you had signed this letter, questioning our Union's support for them and wider transgender equality and also, regrettably, their continued membership of PCS.

While we appreciate you may have signed the letter in a personal capacity, as a well-known General Secretary of a major trade union and given the similar position of several other signatories, your signature has led to many making an assumption about our Union's policies on transgender, and wider equality, issues as well as on inclusion and how our union views members in underrepresented groups, including those who are LGBT+.

In regards to the letter, we have several concerns both concerning the letter itself and issues that have arisen following its publication, and would like to raise these with you;

1. In the letter it states "We are calling for action within our movement to allow debate to take place over proposed changes to the Act."

As you are well aware PCS' Annual Delegate Conference (ADC) has debated Gender Recognition reform in 2017, and again in 2018.

In 2017, motion A78 was successfully carried, despite a call for remission from the National Executive Committee, which committed our Union to fully support the implementation of the Women and Equalities Committee's "Transgender Report".

At this year's ADC motion A18 again debated Gender Recognition reform with opposition heard during the debate. Following this the motion was overwhelmingly carried, further committing PCS to supporting improving the Gender Recognition process.

Similar discussions have also taken place within the NEU, Unison and, most recently, Unite with support for reform also agreed by their respective members.

2. The letter provides a limited sample of alleged incidents and makes the claim that these cases are part of "systematic attempts to shut down meetings" and "draw the whole of our progressive movement into disrepute."

Each of the examples listed are specifically of alleged aggression from one side of the "debate" towards the other.

We are concerned that this is an attempt to create a one-sided narrative and uses the actions of a very small minority to portray the many who peacefully support reform in the same light.

Throughout this debate there have been numerous examples, including some signatories to the letter, of inappropriate behaviours towards transgender individuals and cisgender allies. These include, but aren't limited to;

- Deliberately misgendering transgender individuals, in particular consistently referring to trans women as men
- Deliberately dead naming transgender individuals - referring to them by the name given to them at birth
- Insinuating that transgender men are butch lesbians who should undergo therapy to accept themselves
- Accusing parents of transgender young people of child abuse for supporting their children
- Using terms such as "handmaiden" towards cisgender women who voice their support for reform and questioning their feminism
- Insinuating cisgender women are transgender on the basis of their appearance

Proud stands opposed to all forms of hate, bullying and harassment and condemns the actions provided in the published letter but also those who engage in the activities listed above.

3. The use of “ordinary women” within the letter.

We find the use of this term offensive by insinuating those opposed to the position expressed in the letter are not ordinary. We believe this follows from the example provided above which refuses to acknowledge that trans men are men and that trans women are women.

4. Following the publication of the letter, Proud contacted PCS Equality Department to request a statement on behalf of PCS to welcome the beginning of the consultation, reiterate our policy on reforming the Gender Recognition Act and to confirm that the NEC and Proud would begin working together to prepare our response in line with the policies agreed by PCS' ADC.

As of the date of this letter no acknowledgement of this request has been forthcoming, adding to members concerns following the publication of the letter on the 4th July in the Morning Star.

In light of these concerns we would like to ask for clarification of the following and that a statement to that effect be made available to our members as soon as possible;

1. Do you agree that our Union has allowed debate over gender recognition reform to take place at ADC and recognise the agreed will of our membership to support the proposed reform?
2. Do you recognise and agree that there has been inappropriate behaviours on both sides of the “debate”, including those listed above, and join us in calling for an immediate end to such behaviours on all sides?
3. That our Union remains opposed to all forms of hate and discrimination and fully recognises all of our trans and non-binary members in the gender with which they themselves identify?
4. What discussions, if any, took place between yourself and others within PCS prior to the publication of the letter on the 4th July given our Union's position on this issue was previously known?
5. Why no comment has been made publicly, either prior to or following our request for this on Wednesday 4th July, causing unnecessary hurt and upset to many of our Union's members?

We will be publishing this letter publicly in the interest of transparency for Proud members and look forward to your response in due course.

Sincerely yours,

Richard Jones

Proud Chair

Saorsa Tweedale

Proud Trans Members' Rep