



Whittome's Early Day Motion to reject the EHRC's transphobic code passes 100 signatures

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transphobic

Labour MP Nadia Whittome has [announced a motion](#) to reject the Equalities and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) transphobic Code of Practice. [Rachel Taylor MP](#) likewise of Labour, also gave a moving account of why she signed the motion.

Whittome and Taylor have also urged other MPs to sign the motion. To this end, trans rights campaign groups [TransActual](#) [Trans+ Solidarity Alliance](#) and [Scottish Trans](#) have [created an email template](#) for constituents to write to their MPs to urge them to sign.

Scottish Trans stated that, [in just one week](#) over 1,200 people have already written to their representatives.

Transphobic code rejected

The EHRC's draft guidance, [as it currently stands](#), calls for service providers to exclude trans people from single-sex spaces reflecting their gender, and also often those of their sex assigned at birth. The government's own impact assessment has acknowledged that it will likely harm trans and gender non-conforming individuals.

[Whittome explained](#) that her Early Day Motion (EDM), [tabled 1 June](#) is:

This motion is currently the only available mechanism by which MPs can reject the EHRC's Code of Practice; if debated and passed within the 40-day scrutiny window, it would prevent the EHRC from issuing the Code and bringing it into force. This is

unfortunately unlikely, but it is important that as many MPs as possible sign the motion.

MPs [already highlighted](#) the obvious harms of the EHRC's draft code in a parliamentary debate at the beginning of Pride month. Nevertheless, as Whittome highlighted, the government still looks highly likely to accept the guidance.

Early Day Motions have no set day for debate in Parliament. As such, most are never debated. However, EDMs do act as a mechanism to track MPs's support for a particular cause.

The only current alternative is to allow the segregation of trans people in the UK to be enacted with apparent total support. As such, it's crucial that trans-positive MPs (or even the transphobes who recognise that the code is unworkable) make their voices heard.

EHRC's "hollow words of concern"

Regarding her decision to sign Whittome's EDM, [Rachel Taylor MP explained](#) that:

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I went into today's Women and Equality Committee to listen carefully to what the Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission had to say about the recently tabled Code of Practice. After that session, I am deeply concerned that our national human rights body is worryingly complacent about a document that the government's own impact assessment says puts transgender people at increased risk of harassment, violence and sexual abuse.

In particular, Taylor highlighted the EHRC chair's "hollow words of concern" in answer to a question on trans people fleeing domestic violence. She continued:

During the session, the chair repeatedly struggled to answer questions about the glaring contradictions throughout the guidance. It is not good enough to simply defer to notions of "common sense" at points where the guidance simply isn't fit for purpose. It is blatantly obvious that the code is simply unworkable. And it is not credible to deny to enacting the Code will entrench a policing of harmful gender norms that many of us have fought so hard to overturn for many decades.

This gender policing hasn't waited for the code to pass. Support groups [have already reported that](#), following the Supreme Court's ruling, gender non-conforming women have faced increased harassment in single-sex spaces.

"The return of poisonous division"

Taylor [also called out](#) the ludicrous fact that the government's impact assessment recognises the harm perpetrated by the code. She highlighted that the assessment:

repeatedly states that it is likely to increase community tension and conflict across our society, in an age that already feels defined by the return of poisonous division and open bigotry. The EHRC was created to be the champion of equality and tolerance, not a passive bystander to the marginalisation of vulnerable people.

Despite a change of leadership, it remains my view that the EHRC does not seem interested in advocating for and standing up for the rights of LGBT and particularly transgender people. As a lifelong campaigner for equality, that is not something I can accept.

The Women and Equalities Committee and the Joint Committee on Human Rights refused to endorse the current EHRC chair, Mary-Ann Stephenson. Both groups warned that she lacked experience in advocacy work beyond a narrow, [and distinctly transphobic](#) focus on women's rights.

Taylor also reiterated Whittome's pessimism regarding the EDM itself, deeming it a "symbolic act". Stating that she couldn't sit by and allow the harmful code to pass without making her voice heard, [she expressed frustration that](#)

signing this one is the only avenue available for making my views clear in what is clearly a deeply flawed process.

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Stand in solidarity

However, above and beyond that frustration, Taylor recognised [her duty to stand up](#) for a marginalised community:

I believe it is incumbent on me to stand in solidarity with transgender people across the country, and particularly my transgender constituents who have told me the real fear and distress they are feeling.

LGBT+ anti-abuse charity Galop have reported a [27% increase](#) in hate crime calls over the last year. Likewise, Samaritans - a charity offering emotional support to people at risk of suicide - expressed alarm at the [40% spike in trans callers](#) to its hotline following the Supreme Court ruling.

Posting on social media, Scottish Trans [told its followers that](#)

We must keep pressure up on the issue, and make sure MPs understand how this horrific guidance will impact so many people's lives. Every person who emails is vital, and every MP who formally objects makes a difference. We only have a few weeks left to reject this Code of Practice, so make sure your voice is heard.

If you would like to write to your MP and urge them to sign the EDM to reject the transphobic Code of Practice, you can find an email template at the link [here](#)

Featured image via [Getty/Alishia Abodunde](#)

By [Alex/Rose Cocker](#)

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