

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Marks, Kate](#); [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Trans / gender critical belief issues- Exec champion update
Date: 04 November 2022 09:27:34
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.jpg](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)

Hi both

Kate thanks again for offering to support this new network. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and he has so far expressed an interest in alignment with Belief re the Network support structures we have.... But he's been contemplating with his colleagues and not reached a conclusion yet. We will use Mon/Tues meetings to try and clarify where they want to go with it and I think perhaps just being able to offer [REDACTED] an initial exploratory chat with you could be helpful.

I agree entirely re difficulties around our diversity Exec Sponsor/ Champion model (and that of Defra) and Network ways of working—there is a paper going to EDT about this (and wider Network support issues) later this month. It aligns to core Defra work to clarify their model, which is working its way through their governance simultaneously. My team are hoping to arrange a meeting for all EA Exec Sponsors/ Champions in Dec/Jan, to share the latest thinking and begin forming a bit more community of support. More clarity and consistency would help everyone!

I'm arranging a meeting for those on my original email, hopefully we can get some time in within the next couple of weeks. Meantime I'll let you know what comes of the meetings Mon/Tues
All the best

From: Marks, Kate <Kate.Marks@environment-agency.gov.uk>
Sent: 03 November 2022 11:03
To: [REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk
Subject: RE: Trans / gender critical belief issues- Exec champion update

Hi [REDACTED]

The law is (at least initially) clear on this, a belief is one that meets the Grainger criteria, it does not need to be religious or spiritual:

- The belief must be genuinely held
- It must be a belief and not an opinion or viewpoint based on the present state of information available
- It must be a belief as to a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour
- It must attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion, and importance
- It must be worthy of respect in a democratic society, be not incompatible with human dignity, and not conflict with the fundamental rights of others.

Ethical veganism has met the same test (with an extremely high bar though). Generically, they are being called 'philosophical' beliefs. So whilst I agree with you (and as stated in my email below) neither are a good natural fit with what we would traditionally understand to be the protected characteristic of religion and belief, that is at least where the law has placed them as a protected characteristic. My bullet points 3 and 4 speak to your point about whether they want to follow this legal fit or do something different and like you I believe they should be given the choice if possible, I am merely saying that I'm comfortable doing it if either a) you want to link sponsorship to the protected characteristic or b) they choose me (and as per my email, I suspect this is unlikely).

In your email below you ask whether the FaB Network has a definition of belief, hopefully you can see from the above that this is a red herring. The SEEN Network is a separate network, both are covered by the Grainger criteria, and in my corporate role as sponsor for Faith, Belief, Religion and Non-Belief (to give it the full title!), I have a certain level of responsibility for all under that characteristic. I do have concerns that I've voiced before about the overall degradation of the sponsorship and Exec Lead model and ways of working in the 10 years I've been doing this, so perhaps this is an opportunity to revisit it?

Regards
Kate

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>

Sent: 03 November 2022 10:30

To: Marks, Kate <Kate.Marks@environment-agency.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: Trans / gender critical belief issues- Exec champion update

Thanks Kate, really useful. [REDACTED] will reply to this one, it is not my area of work, but I am wondering whether there is a description of the Faith and Belief network that clarifies what "beliefs" are. My assumption is that Beliefs in that network context are religious or spiritual beliefs, aka beliefs that sit, in the system of personal beliefs, quite high in the hierarchy and are linked to our sense of identity, values and mission.

Holding gender critical views might not fall into that category but in a more general category, and for that reason might not be the appropriate slot for them. However, I am concerned that, in the absence of a perfect fit, they might find themselves isolated or without exec support. The other difficulty is that the debate is now so toxic that not many execs might want to support them for fear of stepping into a mire of problems. This is why your offer is incredibly important. I am wondering whether the solution might lie in asking them where they see themselves belonging. Whichever way I trust you would be a great Champion

Best wishes

[REDACTED]

[No need to thank me -Cutting carbon emissions](#)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Strategy, Planning and People
Chief Operating Officer's Directorate
Environment Agency
[REDACTED]

My working hours are: Mondays-Wednesdays 7am-5pm, Thursdays-Fridays 7am-10am

My name is:

How to say my name (phonetic spelling)

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From: Marks, Kate <Kate.Marks@environment-agency.gov.uk>

Sent: 03 November 2022 08:58

To: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; Douglass, Caroline <caroline.douglass@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Lawton, Nicola <nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Sutton, Rob <rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Rawlinson, Lee <lee.rawlinson@environment-agency.gov.uk>

Cc: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk)>; Burns, Anna <anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk>; [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk)>

Subject: RE: Trans / gender critical belief issues- Exec champion update

Hello [REDACTED]

Thank you for this timely update, and very useful background material.

I'm sorry but I appear not to have copied you in to the discussions on this subject in the X-Gov FaB Champions Network meeting that took place the other week, which I did send across to a number of people on this email chain, we were briefed in on it by the Cabinet Office EDI team and had a similar discussion (since replicated at the Defra FaB Board which took place on Monday) about the best sponsors for the network, with as yet no clear outcome but it is worth Defra colleagues staying in touch with CO FaB leads who will set the tone on this, [REDACTED] is my EDI lead for FaB in the Defra HR team.

My thoughts on it are:

- 'Legally' they are a protected characteristic under Religion and Belief, due to meeting the Grainger test
- However we recognise that they are positioning their belief as a counterpoint to some of the current gender and trans support in the Civil Service, and if 'placed' with Religion and Belief, may feel it isn't a sensible grouping, nor getting the seniority that other networks do with Exec Directors and Directors.
- It will depend on what level of sponsorship they wish to have. As a minimum they will need an Exec Manager to sign off on mailboxes and Teams channels and the like, but they may also wish to have a sponsor who is more active in mentoring, strategy, connecting and advocating.
- I am comfortable sponsoring them if you do want to place it under Religion and Belief and they are happy with that.

A couple of other thoughts. We've Inter Faith Week 13-20th November, I don't see any topics on the programme that would potentially overlap with this area but it is one to watch, particularly in the 'ask me anything' type sessions. (Most world religions are more accepting of trans people than homosexuality). The events are largely focused on the major faiths, although we will have some nature based beliefs in there this year. I'm not aware that SEEN will want to take part but you never know. The core themes of mutual respect and understanding between those with different beliefs are central to this discussion too. Please do support this week when comms launch, it is the same week as Transgender Awareness Week and I would expect equal "airtime".

And secondly, this is very much a live topic where I had a fascinating but confidential side bar conversation at our recent Board meeting on their links to a high profile case in this area, much of which was around challenging and improving policies as well. As they continue to develop their approach, I'll share anything relevant with you if not confidential.

Regards

Kate

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>

Sent: 02 November 2022 17:08

To: Douglass, Caroline <caroline.douglass@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Lawton, Nicola <nicola.lawton@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Sutton, Rob <rob.sutton@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Marks, Kate <Kate.Marks@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Rawlinson, Lee <lee.rawlinson@environment-agency.gov.uk>

Cc: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>; [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>; [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>; Burns, Anna <anna.burns@environment-agency.gov.uk>; [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@environment-agency.gov.uk>

Subject: Trans / gender critical belief issues- Exec champion update

Hi all

You will recall we met together on 12 Sept to discuss support for colleagues caught up in ongoing public debate about gender critical views in the context of transgender rights, and how we can work to deescalate conflict. Since then a number of things have happened:

- Conflict between colleagues on a [REDACTED] event held 18 Oct, with several people reporting wellbeing impacts
- Two new FOIs [REDACTED] related to our participation in Stonewall Workplace Equality Index / spending on Stonewall membership and training
- Initial draft of new 'communication principles' developed by HR EDI team, with the aim of setting clearer expectations for users of Yammer, MS Teams chat etc. I am involved in this work, along with [REDACTED]. The initial draft was discussed at ExCo and shared with James on 26 Oct. We have also shared it with our Network leads and collated their initial feedback on 1 Nov
- New cross-government Sex Equality and Equity Network (SEEN- [About SEEN \(seen-network.uk\)](#)) established on 20 Oct, with involvement from EA and NE colleagues. We will support this as we do other diversity networks
- Further conversations with individuals on all sides of the issues, with the aim of fostering better relations/ mutual understanding, protecting wellbeing and understanding where our policies, guidance etc may need improvement

Over the next couple of weeks a few things are happening which may lead to escalations and require your leadership support:

- Meetings 7-8 November between my team, HR and NE EDI teams and the NE/EA leads for SEEN ([REDACTED]). I and my team are working with others to support the new network, as we do our existing networks, and to advise them on how to avoid escalation of conflict/ minimise wellbeing impacts on all sides. [@Marks, Kate](#) one thing we will explore is whether the Network want to align themselves with Faith & Belief and /or if they need an Exec Champion/Sponsor within Defra group/ EA
- Likely 'launch' of SEEN via All Defra Group Yammer channel post between 8-11 Nov. We hope to use the Yammer post as an opportunity to trial a 'moderation panel' approach to ensure virtual conversation happens respectfully
- LGBT+ Network committee meeting 9-10 November
- Transgender Awareness Week and Transgender Day of Remembrance 13-20 Nov
- All staff call 24 Nov (Lucy, John L and James on the panel). I've been asked to prepare a briefing note for the panel by 17 Nov.

James had been made aware of the new Network and [REDACTED] and I helped [REDACTED] prepare a briefing for him today—see attached, along with his response.

Beyond the next few weeks we have the following in train in hopes of further de-escalating:

- My team pursuing external expert advice from BiTC, in hopes they can help facilitate a session between relevant Network leads. [REDACTED] is helping lay groundwork for this.
- Ongoing work with HR EDI team and others on the 'communication principles'. I hope by early Dec we will have a full package that improves on the draft shared with ExCo and Networks this week, along with a 'phase 2' document which outlines escalation and moderation approach, clearer links to our existing people policies etc. I would like to arrange a meeting with you all around that time to review the draft together. My team will then lead consultation with EA Networks (including SEEN) and use this feedback to

produce a final draft, ideally in December. Rob will support me in engaging our Trade Unions as well. We will then bring this for signoff to Communication Customers and Engagement Portfolio governance group ideally in January—date tbc with Anna Burns’ team—and enlist Defra Internal Comms team support to roll out

- Exploring review of some relevant policy documents with HR
- Exploring advance publication of information regarding our involvement with Stonewall to reduce FOI burden

Please can you let me know if you have any concerns or suggestions re the above, and whether you would value a meeting to discuss?

[@Nicola Lawton](#) please can you update Lucy and let me know if she needs further briefing beyond the note we’ll prepare for the all staff call?

Many thanks





Manager – 

People & Change – Strategy, Planning & People – Chief Operating Officer’s Directorate

Mobile: 




Email:  [@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto: @environment-agency.gov.uk)

Location: Brampton, Cambridgeshire (working from home for foreseeable future)

Please note I work a flexible schedule, with longer hours Mon-Thurs and shorter Fridays (details in my Outlook calendar / out of office message)

Pronouns:  ([why is this here?](#))



		respect at work 1 
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How to pronounce my name

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