
**RESPONSE BY MAYA FORSTATER TO COMPLAINT
TO THE SCOUT ASSOCIATION BY GREGOR MURRAY**

AUGUST 10 2019

BACKGROUND

1. The Complainant Gregor Murray is a Scout Leader in Dundee. I am an Assistant Cub Scout Leader in St Albans. I have never met or had any contact with Murray before Murray initiated a conversation on Facebook in response to a post I made.
2. I was told by my District Commissioner that this person had made a complaint about me on June 26th and that it would be handled by HQ. I understand it has now been directed back to St Albans District. I received details of the complaint on August 1st.
3. The complaint relates a Facebook discussion in response to a post that I made on "1st Scouts Facebook" group on May 29 to which the complainant and others responded, and to three tweets I wrote on June 3rd in response to a tweet by the Complainant on May 28th.
4. I do not have the screen captures of all of my side of the Facebook discussion (I did not anticipate that there would be a complaint against me and did not take pictures of my side of the conversation). However I did capture my original post and some of my comments as well as much of the other side of the discussion by participants including Murray, which displayed attitudes I found very concerning. I have already submitted this to The Scout Association (on June 2nd) not as a complaint against those participants individually, but as **whistleblowing about a concerning culture in parts of Scouting (and promoted by external trans advocacy groups) which I think raises safeguarding risks.**

5. I remain unsatisfied with the way The Scout Association has responded to these concerns. This complaint by Gregor Murray is a demonstration of the way that accusations of **'misgendering'** and **transphobia** can be misused as a means of bullying people, and preventing them speaking up about safeguarding and inclusion concerns and their own and other's reasonable expectations of bodily privacy in single sex facilities (e.g. at camp).

THE COMPLAINT

6. The complainant's complaints are that I:
 - a. **Misgendered** the complainant on Twitter
 - b. **Spread lies** about the complainant on Twitter
 - c. **Personally attacked the claimant on Facebook**
 - d. **Encouraged "pile ons"** on the complainant harming the claimant's mental health.
 - e. **Did not follow Scout values and Scout law** in my treatment of the complainant

OVERVIEW: RESPONSE TO THE COMPLAINT

7. **I dispute all of the claims and consider them vexatious and without merit or evidence.**
8. **The complaint includes baseless accusations calling me an "anti-trans bigot" "transphobic" and linked to a "hate group"**. This defamation threatens to harm my reputation inside and outside of Scouting, and defames the group Transgender Trend. On Twitter the complainant has also said that I put children's lives at risk and am not fit to be in UK Scouting.
9. I contend that Murray has succeeded in using the complaints procedure of The Scouts Association as a means to harass and intimidate me.
10. Given the complexity of the issues involved in this complaint, the uncertainty of Scout Association policy and Murray's known history as an abuser of women online I do not think this issue should have been delegated down to the District Commissioner in St Albans to handle. The complaint raises a number of questions for The Scout Association which cannot be resolved at the level of volunteers in St Albans District but need to be

answered by staff at HQ. These are covered on page 11 . **I request that the complaint be handled by HQ with answers given to these questions.**

THE FACTS

11. I confirm that I started a thread on 1st Scouts Facebook (a large, unofficial Facebook group mainly consisting of UK Scout Leaders) on May 29th. My post was a summary and a link to an article I wrote about Scout's revised Transgender Policy, which had been published on the website of Transgender Trend [Exhibit 2].
12. The first person to respond to my post was Gregor Murray, who criticised it and used the term TERF. When I said that TERF is a term of abuse, Murray defended its use by saying that TERFS are "scum" [Exhibit 3 - Page 12] Murray was quickly joined by other leaders who agreed with Murray and who joined in calling me and another female leader who welcomed the new guidance transphobes and bigots. Murray said I was not fit to be a Scout Leader. [Exhibit 3- Page 13] that "your guidance will leave children dead" [Exhibit 3 – Page 21].
13. It was not clear whether the group commenting on the post, all with very similar views, was orchestrated or spontaneous. The conversation on Facebook was deleted by the moderators on the second day (Several people on the conversation were calling for it to be removed and I assume they directly approached the moderators and had it removed).
14. I was concerned by the attitudes displayed in the conversation and on June 2nd I sent details and screenshots to Scouts HQ (Chief Safeguarding Officer Tina Wilson) [Exhibit 3].
15. Reflecting on the conversation I realised that the Scout Leader who had been the first to begin insulting me (and also the other female leader on that thread who supported the revised guidelines) was the a local government Councillor in Scotland, who I had previously heard about in relation to being censured for abusing women online, and in particular calling them TERFS.
16. I noticed Murray had tweeted on May 28th "Deeply concerning hearing that Scouting may have watered down their trans inclusion policies. Doesn't fill me with confidence, or a feeling of safety. Will @UKScouting @ScoutsScotland @flagscoutscomment on this? Have we been listening to TERFs rather than trans scouts?" [Exhibit 1]

17. On June 3 I posted a tweet which linked to Murray's and said "Gregor Murray. Suspended as a local councillor after calling women who disagree with him TERFS and "utter c**ts" now applying terms of abuse to fellow scout leaders and parents who raised safeguarding concerns". Later I tweeted "its shocking that he calls strengthening the guidance to bring it into line with safeguarding practice and the Equality Act, "watering down" the guidance." [Exhibit 4]
18. Gregor Murray responded "It's shocking that you're purposefully misgendering me." And then "Way to prove you're not a bigot - by spreading lies, and by misgendering me. I stand by my statement earlier - @MForstater is not fit to be a member of @UKScouting. She is a bigot and should not be allowed to endanger the lives of our young people or spread her bigotry. [Exhibit 5]

COMPLAINANT'S STATEMENTS OF FACTS WHICH I DISPUTE

- 19. In support of the complaint, Murray makes several statements which I dispute as clearly and utterly false, without evidence, and in several cases defamatory:**
- a. **That I am an "anti-trans bigot"**. This is untrue, unevidenced and defamatory.
 - b. **That the complainant, Gregor Murray is not a man**. This is untrue. Gregor Murray is a man who identifies as 'non binary gender'.
 - c. **That Transgender Trend is a 'hate group'**. This is untrue, unevidenced and defamatory towards Transgender Trend.
 - d. **That I claimed that the Scout Association has been working with Transgender Trend**. This is untrue. I did not make this claim. It appears to be a misunderstanding by Gregor Murray, based perhaps on the statement given by the Scout Association to the Sunday Times that "We have worked with members of the trans and feminist communities to update our guidance".
 - e. **That I am "attacking trans individuals"**. This is untrue, unevidenced and defamatory.
 - f. **That I am "crusading against trans people"**. This is untrue, unevidenced and defamatory.
 - g. **That I lost my "main employment for transphobia"**. This is untrue, unevidenced and defamatory.

20. I am not going to answer each of these points one by one, as Murray does not give evidence or argument for them. Most of them are simply baseless name calling, and are similar to statements Murray has made about many women with whom Murray disagrees [exhibit 7]. However I will clarify points b. and c. below (at paragraphs 22 and 28).

21. Murray also makes a statement that suggests that Murray is in contact with Matt Hyde the Chief Executive of the Scout Association and that Mr Hyde shares Murray's view that Transgender Trend is a hate group (From the complaint: "informed me that the Scout Association have not been working with this hate group at all."). This may just be a reflection of Gregor Murray imputing Murray's own beliefs to other people. **I request Matt Hyde to confirm whether he agreed with Murray in calling Transgender Trend a "Hate Group"?**

ADDITIONAL FACTS

22. **Gregor Murray is a man.** Sex is one of the nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act states that "man" means a male of any age, and "woman" means a female of any age [section 212]. This is not determined by 'gender identify'. Murray's sex is male therefore Murray is a man.

23. **Gregor Murray is a man with a history of abusing women on the internet.** Murray has frequently referred to women using terms such as TERFS, utter roasters, utter scum, hateful and vile. The claimant called Lesbians protesting at Pride "utter c*nts" and referred to policies to increase female representation as "feminist shite". In 2018 Councillor Murray resigned as Children's Convenor after criticism of Murray's insults against women concerned about gender self-ID on Reddit and Twitter [Exhibit 6] Other women Murray has condemned as anti-trans bigots, transphobes and TERFs"include Joanna Cherry QC MP; Joan McAlpine MP; Jenny Marra MSP; Mandy Rhodes, Editor of Holyrood Magazine; Shona Craven, Journalist The National; Susan Sinclair, Scottish Women. Organisations Murray has called "Hate Groups" include Woman's Place UK, For Women Scotland and Women and Girls Scotland. Murray has called for McAlpine and Cherry to resign and for these grassroots women's organisations to be shut down. [Exhibit 7]

24. **Murray frequently uses the term TERF** (standing for Trans Exclusive Radical Feminist) to refer to women who Murray does not agree with on questions of how gender identity and sex should be considered in public and organisational policies.
25. **TERF is recognised as a term of abuse, and Gregor Murray knows this.** As a local Councillor Gregor Murray was subject to a complaint considered by the Standards Commission for Scotland, which involved his use of this term. Murray contended ‘TERF’ was a simple descriptor. However, the panel ruled that as Murray identified ‘TERFS’ as being “scum”, “hateful” and “vile”. Murray was clearly using it as an expression of abuse and a personal attack on the person the term was directed at. [Exhibit 8 – Pages 47-48]
26. **Gregor Murray was suspended as a councillor for two months due to his conduct online.** The Standards Commission for Scotland Panel called the Councillor’s conduct gratuitously offensive and was concerned that the Councillor had failed to demonstrate any insight “into the impact their behaviour may have had on the complainer and her ability to raise issues with the Council, or on the public’s view of councillors in general.” The Panel also noted that the conduct was not a one-off incident. [Exhibit 8 – Page 49]. Murray resigned from the SNP pre-emptively the day before the Panel gave its verdict, calling the SNP transphobic and taking no responsibility for his own actions [Exhibit 9].
27. **Transgender Trend is a parent led group promoting evidence-based guidance on including trans and gender questioning children.** Its founder was shortlisted for the John Maddox Prize in 2018 and its guidance was recently found to be the most compliant with EHRC Technical Guidance for Schools in a Times Educational Supplement review. It is not a ‘hate group’. The Scout Association has so far declined invitations to meet with them.

RESPONSE TO MURRAY’S SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST ME: “MISGENDERING”

28. On Twitter I referred to Murray by the pronoun ‘he’. This was not purposeful or meant to cause harm. I had simply forgotten that this man demands to be referred to by the plural pronouns “they” and “them”.
29. Murray states that my failure use the pronoun “they” in relation to the complainant breaks the third and seventh scout laws (“A Scout is friendly and considerate” and “A Scout has self-respect and respect for others”) because Murray believes that Murray is

not a man. Murray also calls it “transphobic” that I recognise a man when I see one. I disagree.

30. In reality Murray is a man. It is Murray’s right to believe that Murray is not a man, but Murray cannot compel others to believe this. Women in children in particular should not be forced to lie or obfuscate about someone’s sex.
31. I reserve the right to use the pronouns “he” and “him” to refer to male people. While I may choose to use alternative pronouns as a courtesy, no one has the right to compel others to make statements they do not believe. I think it is important that people are able to refer to the sex of other people accurately and without hesitation, shame or censure. This is important for children to be able to speak up about anything that makes them feel uncomfortable, and for adults to be able to risk assess the difference between a single sex and mixed sex situation.
32. If I was to come across Murray or any other male in the women’s changing showers or toilets at scout camp I would have no hesitation in referring to that person as “he”, whatever their professed gender identity, removing myself and supporting other women to remove themselves and in reporting the incident. I think it is important that Scouts makes this expectation clear. As a Scout Leader, Murray (and others) must understand that his feeling of not being a man do not correspond to the reality experienced by others and the responsibility of The Scout Association to protect everyone’s privacy and safety and to include all sections of society.

RESPONSE TO MURRAY’S SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST ME: “LYING”

33. Murray states “Secondly, it is entirely untrue that I have been suspended as a local Councillor. I am, and will remain until the next local elections, a local Councillor.”
34. On May 17 2019 the Standards Commission for Scotland Hearing Panel ruled to “suspend Councillor Murray’s entitlement to attend all meetings of Dundee City Council and of any committee or sub-committee thereof, with effect from and including Monday, 20 May 2019.” This was widely reported in the media. [Exhibits 8, 9 and 10]. Murray has retweeted articles with positive endorsement that state that Murray was suspended (<https://twitter.com/grogipher/status/1161005455063289857>)

35. Murray's statement that "it is entirely untrue that I was suspended" is therefore entirely untrue. Indeed at the time of my tweet about Murray the suspension would have been current.

36. Murray's description of me a liar is vexatious and defamatory.

RESPONSE TO MURRAY'S SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST ME: "TERMS OF ABUSE"

37. Murray states "have not applied any terms of abuse to any scout leader, or any parent.

This is an extreme besmirching of my character. This is an insidious lie, and must be recanted. This breaks the first, third, fourth, and seventh Scout Laws."

38. Both on Twitter and Facebook Murray called people who expressed concern about the previous Scout transgender guidance "TERFs". On twitter asking "Have we been listening to TERFs rather than trans scouts?" and on Facebook saying "Really sad to see TSA listening to TERFs rather than actual trans people".

39. On Facebook this was specifically directed at me (a parent and Scout Leader) following my post, and the complainant did not withdraw it even after I had pointed out that TERF is an insult often directed at women, associated with threats of violence and intending to shut down debate. Murry responded "I have called TERFS scum. And they are".

40. Murray's contention that "I have not applied any term of abuse to any Scout Leader" seems to be based on the contention that TERF (and also by extension 'scum') are not a terms of abuse.

41. Murray in the Facebook conversation and on Twitter also accused me of putting children's lives at risk and of not being fit to be a Scout Leader.

42. Murray states that Murray did not " cast any aspersions, I was not abusive, I just... asked a question". This account of events does not tally with the documentary evidence from Murray's Facebook and Twitter posts

43. As previously mentioned Murray has already been sanctioned for using the term TERF by the Standards Commission for Scotland, which found it was a term of abuse.

RESPONSE TO MURRAY'S SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST ME: "FURTHER PERSONAL ATTACKS"

44. Murray states that following our Twitter exchange I posted on Facebook spreading "the same misinformation about [Murray], and about the Scout Association as she did on

Twitter, as well as further personal attacks. I was very upset by these, and did not get a chance to record them before they were removed.”

45. Murray’s recounting of this entirely inaccurate. The discussion on Facebook took place on May 29 *before* I tweeted on June 3rd. My initial Facebook post said “I am pleased that they [Scouts] have updated their guidance to make it more cautious, while still supporting inclusion for all in Scouting”. It was not triumphant.
46. As recounted above the first contact I had with Murray was when Murray responded to my Facebook post, by making personal attacks on me. As the screenshot evidence shows Murray called me a TERF, and said that TERFs are scum. Murray said I am completely irresponsible and completely unfit to be a Scout Leader [Exhibit 3].
47. In the complaint Murray claims I made personal attacks as part of this Facebook thread. I did not. As you can see from the screen shots, there were many people (all strangers to me) vehemently disagreeing with me, and many calling me names and impugning my integrity and motives. I was discussing the substantive points, and not getting personal with anyone. Murray said “I was very upset by these [personal attacks Murray alleges I made] and did not get a chance to record them before they were removed.” As the screenshots from the discussion shows there were several people discussing having the post, and me removed from the group before it was deleted. If I had made personal attacks on Murray, I am sure that Murray or one of the other people saying I am unfit to be a Scout Leader would have had time to screen shot them.
48. In short, there is no evidence that I made personal attacks on Murray, but clear evidence that Murray and others made personal attacks on me and the other female Scout Leader raising safeguarding concerns.
49. In his complaint Murray said I “became increasingly transphobic” on Facebook. As can be seen from the screenshots the kinds of things I was saying were statements about the impacts on safeguarding and inclusion of treating adults and children who declare a transgender identity as if they are actually and in every sense members of the opposite sex “Unwillingness to recognise that a child is male, even if socially we accommodate their preference for a female social identity rings alarm bells. Completely ignoring the sex of a child in our care (who needs privacy, who may be menstruating, who can get each other pregnant, who we might need to take to hospital, is

irresponsible).” I do not believe this is transphobic, and I think the fact that a significant, vocal and aggressive group of Scout leaders thinks that it is very concerning.

RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST ME: “ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO PILE ON ME ON TWITTER”

50. Murray said “She is encouraging people to pile on me on Twitter, causing my mental health to suffer further.”

51. I did not encourage people to pile on, and there were no pile on. There were about 10 responses to my tweet.

RESPONSE TO MURRAY’S SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST ME: “NOT UPHOLDING SCOUT VALUES OR LAW”

52. Murray says I am not fit to be in UK Scouting.

53. Murray argues that because I do not share a belief in gender identity ideology (for example I do not accept that an adult male is not a man because they say they don’t feel like one) , and because I argue that TERF is a term of abuse that I am breaking Scout Laws.

54. I think this is a misuse of Scout laws which is being used to bully me and protect arguments which display a lack of understanding of safeguarding, consent and personal boundaries. This is highly concerning.

55. The Scout Association opposes all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. I share these values and am not “transphobic”.

56. The Scout Association is committed that no young person or volunteer should receive less favourable treatment or suffer disadvantage harassment or discrimination by reason of the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act (and with the addition of class/ socio-economic status and political belief). As a feminist I hold the belief that sex is a material reality and that this matters. I, and other Scouts who hold this belief, should not be discriminated against or harassed because of it. This does not prevent gender questioning children being fully included in Scouts.

57. Murray contends that the Scout Laws to be “respectful” “friendly” and “considerate” create an expectation that no child or adult can speaking clearly and honestly about

what sex someone is (prohibition against 'misgendering'). I believe this is dangerous and is not inclusive. No child should be encouraged or coerced to lie or keep a secret about an adult's sex. This leaves them vulnerable to abuse. Adults should also be able to state clearly what someone's sex is, particularly when it is necessary for their own privacy or for safeguarding children.

58. Murray contends because I do not accept being called TERF scum I have broken several Scout Laws and am not "a Scout to be trusted", "friendly and considerate", worthy of "belonging to the worldwide family of Scouts" or demonstrating "self-respect and respect for others". I contend using the Scout Laws in this way to try to shame someone into accepting a term of abuse being applied to them is harassment and bullying. I am not easily bullied, but it find it utterly appalling that any Scout Leader would try to use the apparatus of the Scout Association and our shared values to do this.

QUESTIONS FOR THE SCOUT ASSOCIATION

59. Murray's complaint raises several questions for the Scout Association which cannot and should not be pushed down to the level of volunteer leadership in St Albans District to answer.

- **QUESTION 1:** Does the Scout Association consider it part of its mandate to hear personal complaints about disagreements on social media between people who are members of the Scout Association?
- **QUESTION 2 :** Does the Scout Association agree that anyone recognising Murray as male, or recognising the sex of any person with a transgender identity, is transphobic?
- **QUESTION 3:** Does the Scout Association have a general prohibition against "misgendering"? (i.e. distinguishing between sex and gender identity).
- **QUESTION 4:** Does the Scout Association view the term TERF as a term of abuse?
- **QUESTION 5:** Does the Scout Association consider Transgender Trend a hate group? (and if not why will they not meet them?)

60. I can find nothing in the Scouts guidance or POR which suggests that the Scout Association has a general authority to police the tone and content of member's conversations on social media.

61. I have taken the time to respond to Murray's complaint in detail, not because I think that the unevidenced and nonsensical accusations reach a level where they *should* be taken seriously, but because the consequences of being branded a "transphobe" and a "bigot" are serious. On Twitter Murray says "I should not be allowed to endanger the lives of our young people" and that I am not fit to be in Scouting. This is a heinous allegation.
62. I am concerned that the Scout Association, having had this complaint for over a month, has ignored Murray's well-known history of abusing women online, and pushed the investigation back down to the level of the District, which is unequipped and lacks guidance from HQ. Murray has been enabled to use the Scout Association's complaints mechanism to bully and harass me, on the basis of my sex and my beliefs.
63. **I am concerned that similar complaints of 'transphobia' and charges of 'misgendering' may be used throughout Scouts** to bully, harass and intimidate young people, parents, leaders who want bodily privacy (particularly for women and girls) to be respected or who raise safeguarding concerns related to the drive to affirm gender questioning children as transsexuals, without parental consent or medical diagnosis.
64. **I would like this complaint to be considered vexatious and harassment, and I would like action taken to ensure that Murray does not similarly harass others in Scouting in this way. I would also like Scouts to consider how this complaint has been handled and what guidance is needed to prevent claims of 'transphobia' being used to bully women and girls in Scouting.**

Maya Forstater

August 10 2019