

This is a re-recording of the full interview conducted with me by Greatest Hits Radio Berkshire on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026 concerning the decision by Girlguiding UK to ban trans girls and women from being members, leaders and volunteers. Only short excerpts were used by the radio station and I think it is worthwhile having the full recording available. I shall be in the rather peculiar situation of reading the questions to myself.

My name is Andrea Brookes, my pronouns are she/her and I am vice chair of Newbury Pride.

1. How do you feel about Girlguiding's decision to ask trans girls and trans women to leave by September, and what impact do you think this will have on those affected?

Girl Guiding's misguided and legally questionable decision was in my understanding forced upon them by the threat of being sued by those anti-trans campaigners and organisations with extremely deep pockets and they were not in a secure enough financial position to counter even though the chances are very high that they would win any such case, but you can never be sure of anything in court. I say legally questionable because this decision forces young trans people to be outed which is contrary to the provisions of the Equality Act and the decision has not been justified as is also required by the same Act. It is also very difficult to understand how they are going to police this decision without on one hand invading the young girl or woman's privacy in the most intrusive way, or on the other falsely accusing, girls and young women on the basis of appearance. Is this the sort of environment that anyone wants where your acceptance is based on your appearance? Where our young people are taught that their value, their status, who they are is determined just by what they wear, by the style of their haircut, what someone else decides, that's not a world I want for our young people or indeed for anyone.

The impact will be devastating to those young girls and women affected as not only will the friendships, camaraderie, support and acceptance that has been built up over the past years be completely ripped apart, but their identities, their fundamental knowledge of who they are will also be significantly degraded. There really is no justification for this action except for cruelty, there are no safeguarding issues here, there is no indoctrination being done, these are young girls and women supporting each other, learning life skills and sharing experiences in a mutually supportive environment.

2. What kind of support do you think trans young people and their families need right now in light of this announcement

They need to know that they are not alone in this and this is not by any means the end of the struggle to recognise their validity and their humanity. There are organisations and support groups that can help both the young people and their families and maybe one of the best resources to reach out to in the first instance is their local Pride who may be able to signpost them to other suitable or specialist organisations. The national charities such as Mermaids may be able to help for younger trans girls. One alternative may be to look at the scouts which has remained inclusive however they do have a different approach to Girl Guides so may or may not be a suitable alternative. And another response may be to watch this space, this decision has been seen by so

many within the Guiding movement as a betrayal of the core promises that were made that there may be alternatives to Guiding being developed as a direct response. As an example of the betrayal that has been felt by so many, they are wearing their promise badges upside down which is of course an international sign of distress and in this case is also being done to show a promise broken.

Trans young people deserve safe spaces and trans volunteers deserve equal opportunities to contribute and trans inclusion is compatible with UK law when approached correctly. We at Newbury Pride and other Pride organisations are offering practical support to any girl guiding groups, volunteers or stakeholders who wish to maintain trans inclusive environments for young people and in line with the historical principles of safety and fairness which previously stood for something in the Girl Guides.

3. How do you think these changes affect the wider message sent to trans youth and the LGBTQ+ community about belonging and inclusion in the UK?

This is seen by most affected, directly or on the periphery, as another sign of the attempted erasure of trans people from society, promulgated by the same organisations and individuals that threatened the organisation with legal action in the first place. The failure of Girl Guiding to stand up to this level of bullying has left many feeling betrayed and let down by an organisation that states that it supports all girls and young women, it feels like it should replace all with some, as long as you meet a criteria imposed on you by external parties then you will not be segregated – and this is not an idle use of the term, for many of us this, as in other aspects of life, feels like a return to the time of racial segregation, but not on race, on an arbitrary, scientific and medically illiterate understanding of biology, sex and gender, which was the view of the BMA when the Supreme Court made its judgement last year.

We in Newbury Pride and in partnership with many other Prides around the country and the national UK Pride Organisers Network are issuing statements denouncing this choice by Girl Guiding as harmful to all girls – by excluding trans girls they are not protecting anyone, but they are isolating some of the most vulnerable girls. It is well understood that young LGBTQIA+ children, especially trans children, suffer more from poor mental health, self-harm and isolation than their cis-siblings. Girl guiding could have chosen the path of support and inclusion and to being part of the solution that helps and supports all girls, but instead they chose a different path.

4. What would you like to see from organisations like Girlguiding and the government to ensure all young people feel safe and supported in community groups?

In essence I would like Girlguiding to commit to the pledges it made a few years ago when it vowed to stand against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia – to actually grow back its backbone and stand on the principals it has stood for for so many decades. The government should also be listening to young and older trans people and stop making decisions that affect us without including us – the ban on puberty blockers against all evidence to the contrary gathered over the last 50 years is one prime example of this. The best thing that the government could really do is to change the Equality Act to make it absolutely crystal clear that, as was the intention when it was originally written, trans women and girls are for all purposes to be regarded as cis women and girls

and trans men and boys as cis men and boys with the same rights and protections. Additionally, they should make amends for the years that non-binary and intersex people have been ignored and totally disregarded and make provision in law for them too.