

Stonewall subsidy 2023

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Introduction

Many charities and third sector organisations are reliant on public bodies for at least a portion of their revenue. Receiving taxpayers' money puts these organisations in a privileged position.

Stonewall – the LGBTQ+ charity – is one such group. However, it has also received significant scrutiny in recent years, particularly of its Diversity Champions scheme. Organisations pay a subscription to Stonewall in return for guidance on issues such as gender-neutral spaces, pronouns and transgender inclusion as part of this scheme.¹

Taxpayer-funded lobbying must come to an end so that public money is not being used to distort political decision making by unduly advancing policy positions which taxpayers may seriously disagree with.

Key findings

- Taxpayer support of Stonewall in 2021-22 was at least **£1,221,222**. That includes **£709,225 from Diversity Champions**, alongside **£108,602 from conferences, events and training programmes** and supplemented with **£403,395 from grant income**.
- **234** public sector organisations gave money to Stonewall via the **Diversity Champions** scheme, conferences, events and training programmes. In the preceding three years, at least **327** public sector organisations gave to the same scheme and programmes.²
- At least **175 public bodies** are still members of the **Diversity Champions** scheme.
- Separately, public bodies also gave grants to Stonewall. In 2021-22, this totalled £426,390. The **Welsh and Scottish governments gave the highest amount of any public bodies**, at £168,870 and £99,917, respectively.³
- The public sector body that generated the most non-grant revenue for Stonewall was **King's College London, at £15,930**. This included a £6,000 membership fee for Diversity Champions, with the rest spent on training and conferences.
- Quancos including **Companies House**, the **Competition and Markets Authority** and the **Museum of London** were previously members but no longer are.

¹ Somerville, E., Major public sector bodies quit Stonewall diversity training as trans rights row intensifies, *The Daily Telegraph*, 29 May 2021.

² Simpson, D., *Stonewall subsidy: Diversity Champions scheme*, TaxPayers' Alliance, August 2021

³ Stonewall, *Stonewall Equality Limited: Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2022*, p. 28.

Diversity Champions

Stonewall's income comes from a variety of sources. In 2021-22, they raised £7.9 million, of which £905,152 came from grants; nearly half of this was from public bodies.⁴ In 2021-22, the Diversity Champions scheme generated £709,225 in revenue from the public sector.

Their conferences, events and training programmes raised £108,602 from the public sector. Included in this income was the Stonewall Workplace conference in March 2022. This was one of the most attended named events, with at least 14 public bodies present.

Stonewall continues to be a highly controversial organisation. The organisation's co-founder recently said the Diversity Champions membership required a "strict adoption of a narrow political ideology."⁵ The then foreign secretary Liz Truss in May 2021 pushed for all government departments to leave the Diversity Champions scheme.⁶ In spite of this, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) membership was renewed for another year from October 2021. In addition to the FCDO, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs remained members of the scheme after 2021-22. From the information received, no other departments are members.

71 universities and higher education bodies remained members of Diversity Champions in 2021-22 and continue to do so. This compares to 86 in 2020-21. Wrexham Glyndŵr University also paid £208 for some rainbow laces, the only university to do so from the freedom of information requests received.

In comparison, UK police forces have seen a marked decline in Diversity Champions membership. Whereas at least 15 were members in 2020-21, only five are currently members.

Table 1: top ten public body donors to Stonewall's Diversity Champions and associated schemes, 2021-22

Public body	Public sector area	Total costs (£)
King's College London	Education	15,930
Scottish Government	Government	12,840
Nuclear Decommissioning Authority	Defence and security	9,100
Lancaster University	Education	8,580
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office	Government	8,100
Leicestershire county council	Local government	8,000
Imperial College London	Education	7,344
Hywel Dda University Health Board	Health and social care	7,300
The James Hutton Institute	Education	7,200
University of Roehampton	Education	7,000

[Click here to see the full dataset](#)

⁴ Stonewall Equality Limited, *Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2022*, p. 28.

⁵ Fanshawe, S., I helped found Stonewall. But today I plead with every business and public body signed up to its Diversity Champions scheme to reconsider, writes Simon Fanshawe, *Daily Mail*, 22 December 2022.

⁶ Courea, E., Liz Truss urges official withdrawal from Stonewall diversity scheme, *The Times*, 31 May 2021.

Stonewall income from grants

Direct grants are another means of taxpayers' money going to Stonewall. Their latest accounts showed a marked reduction in taxpayer-funded grant income. Between 2015-16 and 2021-22, Stonewall received at least £4.3 million from public bodies in grants (on top of the Diversity Champions scheme).⁷ The amount in 2021-22 was £403,395. However, Stonewall put the amount at £426,390 which covers "total income from Government Sources."⁸

Although Stonewall continues to be funded by British taxpayers, they also attacked the UK government for considering blocking the Scottish parliament's Gender Recognition Reform bill, describing it as a "huge and calamitous move."⁹

Table 2: grants received by Stonewall from taxpayer-funded bodies, £, 2015-16 to 2021-22^{10,11}

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-21	2021-22	Total
Department for Education	254,243	146,897	233,673	299,611	0	0	934,424
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office	94,094	294,974	125,885	145,075	765,061	88,713	1,513,802
Government Equalities Office	0	0	0	0	50,393	0	50,393
NHS Scotland	0	0	33,324	46,000	47,380	45,895	172,599
Scottish government	100,000	97,500	92,500	100,000	150,000	99,917	639,917
Welsh government	119,982	116,202	158,533	157,609	236,529	168,870	957,725
Total	568,319	655,573	643,915	748,295	1,249,363	403,395	4,268,860

⁷ Stonewall also received £618,102 in funding from the coronavirus job retention scheme (furlough).

⁸ Stonewall Equality Limited, *Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2022*, p. 28.

⁹ Kelley, N., *Please Rishi Sunak – don't play games with trans peoples' lives, Stonewall chief pleads*, Pink News, 11 January 2023, www.thepinknews.com/2023/01/11/rishi-sunak-scotland-gender-reform-stonewall/, (accessed 11 January 2023).

¹⁰ All numbers were taken from Stonewall Equality Limited accounts available from Companies House <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/02412299/filing-history>.

¹¹ Stonewall changed their accounting period in 2021. From 30 September 2019, the accounting period was 18 months. This was changed back to a 12 month period from April 2021.

Methodology

A freedom of information request was sent to 396 public bodies who were listed as members of the Diversity Champions scheme on Stonewall's website. This was from a page listed in May 2021 and extracted using the Wayback Machine. The requests were sent out between September and November 2022 and responses received after 10 January 2023 were not included. The request was as follows:

What was the membership fee given to Stonewall as part of their Diversity Champions programme in 2021-22 by your organisation?

Is your organisation currently a member of Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme?

What additional monies have been given to Stonewall in 2021-22? Specifically, this incorporates:

- *Events/conferences (where, for example, your organisation has purchased tickets to attend or entered raffles or auctions organised by Stonewall). Please name any events/conferences that your organisation attended and the date attended.*
- *Other programmes (such as LGBT Leadership programme, LGBT Role Model programme, Ally and/or Trans Ally programmes, as well as Train the Trainer programmes).*

The numbers in table 1 do not include grants received from public bodies. Table 2 includes only grant income. This was taken from the Stonewall financial statements between 2015-16 and 2021-22.

It is possible that some public bodies who said they were members of Diversity Champions in their response no longer are.

University financial years invariably run from August to July, rather than April to March. Unless otherwise stated, this is the timeframe used for these institutions.

Some public bodies – such as the General Pharmaceutical Council – derive their revenue from the fees of their taxpayer-funded members, rather than as grants directly from government. Such organisations have been included since a high proportion of their income is ultimately derived from taxpayers.