



Briefing: Stonewall government grants

June 2021

Overview:

- Between **2015-16 and 2018-19, Stonewall** received at least £2,616,102 in grants from government bodies. The year 2018-19 saw the largest amount, with the organisation receiving £748,295.
- **These figures are an underestimate** of the actual total. This is because a significant proportion of Stonewall's income is from fees (such as Diversity Champions) and events.
- The **Department for Education provided the largest total grant** over the period at £934,424. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Welsh government were the second and third largest public sector sources for grants, giving £660,028 and £552,326 respectively.
- Taxpayer-funded lobbying must come to an end so that public money is not being used to distort political decision making by advancing policy positions which taxpayers may seriously disagree with.

Stonewall Diversity Champions programme:

The Stonewall charity has been the subject of significant public scrutiny in recent weeks.¹ This has been due to the Diversity Champions programme membership scheme. Organisations pay a subscription to Stonewall in return for guidance on issues such as gender-neutral toilets, pronouns and transgender inclusion. The programme works with over 850 organisations in the UK,² of which 250 are government departments and public bodies.³

The equalities minister – Rt. Hon. Liz Truss MP – has recently urged government bodies to withdraw from this programme over value for money concerns: the civil service already has an in-house diversity and equality scheme. These concerns are shared with other organisations, such as the Equalities and Human Right Commission and Acas, which have already withdrawn due to cost reasons.⁴ The Ministry of Justice has also announced its withdrawal from the scheme over concerns about value for money and more public bodies are expected to end their subscriptions.⁵

These events have led to an increased interest in the taxpayer funding of groups like Stonewall, and whether it is right for government departments to hand over public funds to an organisation which advances a public policy position which taxpayers may seriously disagree with.

¹ Bindel, J., Stonewall and the silencing of feminist voices at universities, *The Spectator*, 19 May 2021.

² Stonewall, *Diversity Champions Programme*, 2021, www.stonewall.org.uk/diversity-champions-programme, (accessed 9 June 2021).

³ Somerville, E., Major public sector bodies quit Stonewall diversity training as trans rights row intensifies, *The Daily Telegraph*, 29 May 2021.

⁴ Diver, T., Liz Truss urges Government to withdraw from Stonewall diversity scheme, *The Daily Telegraph*, 31 May 2021.

⁵ Malnick, E., Exclusive: Stonewall 'exodus' begins as Ministry of Justice officials say it has 'lost its way', *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 June 2021.

Grants from government bodies:

Stonewall receives a significant amount of income in grants from public and private organisations. The majority of these institutions are charities and trusts. However, the largest sums are derived from taxpayer-funded government bodies. In 2018-19 alone Stonewall received £1,049,568 in grants, of which £748,295 came from public sector organisations.⁶

The number of public bodies providing grants is small, but the sums given are significant and have been growing, with total grants from public bodies increasing by 32 per cent since 2015-16.

Table: grants received by Stonewall from taxpayer funded bodies, £, 2015-16 to 2018-19^{7,8,9,10,11}

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Total
Department for Education	254,243	146,897	233,673	299,611	934,424
Foreign & Commonwealth Office	94,094	294,974	125,885	145,075	660,028
NHS Scotland	0	0	33,324	46,000	79,324
Scottish government	100,000	97,500	92,500	100,000	390,000
Welsh government	119,982	116,202	158,533	157,609	552,326
Total	568,319	655,573	643,915	748,295	2,616,102

Taxpayer-funded lobbying:

The TaxPayers' Alliance has long called for the ending of taxpayer-funded lobbying and political campaigning. This practice compels taxpayers to fund views and positions of charities and third-sector organisations which they may seriously disagree with. Such spending distorts political decision making, and instead should be left to individual taxpayers rather than determined by public sector bodies.

Analysis has shown almost £40 million has been given to a small sample of political research and campaigning organisations which attack or lobby for changes in public policy,¹² demonstrating the sizable savings on offer if these organisations had no recourse to public funds.

In future, organisations such as Stonewall should not receive taxpayer funding.

⁶ Stonewall Equality Limited, Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 2019, p.29.

⁷ Stonewall Equality Limited, Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 2016, p.21.

⁸ Stonewall Equality Limited, Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 2017, p.21.

⁹ Stonewall Equality Limited, Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 2018, p.26.

¹⁰ Stonewall Equality Limited, Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 2019, p.29.

¹¹ The financial year period is from 1 October - 30 September for each set of accounts.

¹² Hutton, J., *Taxpayer funded lobbying and political campaigning 2020*, TaxPayers' Alliance, 19 February 2020.