

Stonewall subsidy: Diversity Champions scheme

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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 months, 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

It has been argued that the privileged position offered by this has allowed Stonewall to lobby and campaign at the taxpayers' expense. The controversy has therefore seen a number of public bodies exit the programme.² This report looks at non-grant income that Stonewall has received from public sector bodies over a three-year period, including the Diversity Champions scheme. 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

- Between **2018-19 and 2020-21**, Stonewall received at least **£3,105,877** from **327** public sector organisations for their Diversity Champions scheme, conferences, events and training programmes.
- The **Diversity Champions** scheme generated **£2,573,779** in revenue over the three-year period. Their conferences, events and training programmes raised **£532,099**.
- The public sector body that generated the most non-grant revenue for Stonewall was **Homes England, at £45,942**. This included £24,900 on the **Allies training programmes** over two years.
- **86 universities** were members of the Diversity Champions scheme for some or all of the three-year period. This is roughly two thirds of the total number of UK universities. **Goldsmith's** paid £396 for a Stonewall speaker at a **'Queering Children's Literature'** event in February 2020.
- **NHS and related bodies** gave Stonewall **£466,065** over the three years. In total, **58** health service organisations were paying into the Diversity Champions scheme.
- The former **Foreign and Commonwealth Office** gave the most of any government department to the Diversity Champions scheme, training programmes and conferences, at **£19,012**.

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

² Courea, E., Liz Truss urges official withdrawal from Stonewall diversity scheme, *The Times*, 31 May 2021.

Table: top 10 public body donors to Stonewall's Diversity Champions and associated schemes, 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21

Public body	Public sector area	Total costs (£)
Homes England	Housing	45,942
University of the Arts London	Education	33,622
HS2	Property and construction	29,441
Greater London Authority	Local government	23,036
York St John University	Education	21,671
Financial Conduct Authority	Financial services	20,382
Sheffield Hallam University	Education	20,285
King's College London	Education	20,228
House of Commons	Government	19,463
Middlesex University London	Education	19,224

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

Methodology

A freedom of information request was sent to 397 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 in June 2021 and responses received after 4 August 2021 were not included. The request was as follows:

What was the membership fee given to Stonewall as part of their Diversity Champions programme in each of 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 by your organisation?

What additional monies have been given to Stonewall in each of 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21? 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 above and in the data table do not include grants received from government bodies. The TaxPayers' Alliance previously found that Stonewall received £2,616,102 in grants from government bodies between 2015-16 and 2018-19.³

The former Foreign and Commonwealth Office gave Stonewall a total of £376,087 over the three-year period (including for the Diversity Champions scheme). This included £161,893 on a project entitled "facilitating LBT+ inclusion in the International Human Rights System" over a two-year period. Since most of this was outside the scope of the freedom of information request, it has not been included in the dataset.

³ TaxPayers' Alliance, *Briefing: Stonewall government grants*, June 2021.

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 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.