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Labour 'placating gender critics' with latest U-turn - and trans members have had enough

Jul 26 • Written by Patrick Kelleher

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Labour shadow equalities secretary Anneliese Dodds and leader Keir Starmer. (Getty)

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Labour is sitting on the fence over trans rights to placate a gender-critical faction of the party, trans members claim.

After shadow women and equalities secretary Anneliese Dodds officially moved self-ID off the table, several trans Labour members told PinkNews that they're "despondent" about the party's new policy position on gender recognition.

In a [column](#) for The Guardian, Dodds said that, if they win the general election, Labour would "simplify and reform" the Gender Recognition Act (GRA), which allows trans people to amend their birth certificates.

However, she made it clear that the party would [retain the requirement](#) for a gender dysphoria diagnosis before legally being able to change gender – confirming that the party has officially dropped self-identification as a policy.

Instead of having to apply to a medical panel, Dodds proposed that trans people could obtain a diagnosis from just one doctor.

Sophie Robinson, a Labour councillor in Northumberland, responded by telling PinkNews: "It's really sad. It's the dog whistles, it's the tropes that are creeping in."

She no longer feels welcome in the party as a trans person and is frustrated that Labour is seemingly trying to find a balance between supporting trans rights and "gender-critical" demands.

Annaliese Dodds



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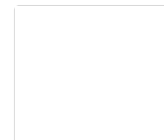
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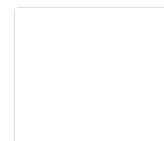
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Anneliese Dodds signalled that Labour no longer supports self-ID for trans people.
(Credit: Getty)

“What we’ve seen is sitting on the fence doesn’t work. Neither side is happy and by sitting on the fence they’re not helping anybody,” Robinson adds.

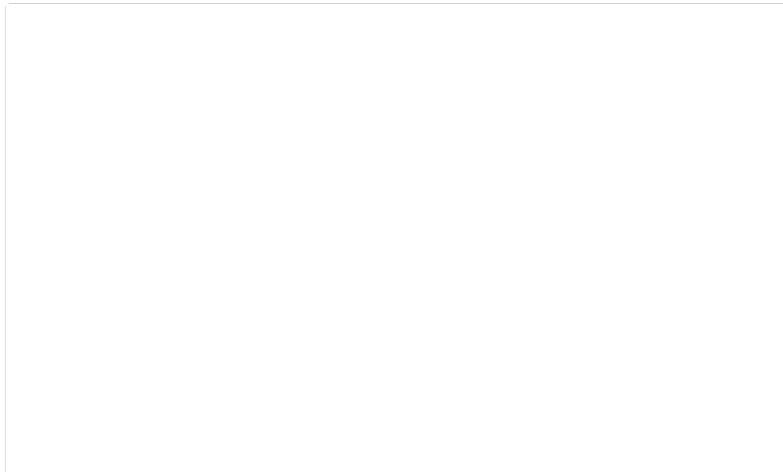
She wants the party to focus on what she sees as the real issues going into the next general election instead of fanning the flames of a culture war that’s spiralling out of control.

“I work in the NHS. We are on our knees. We’re tired. We’re worn out. We feel that that has to be Labour’s main priority,” she insists.

“They need to stand their ground. They’re the party of equality and if that’s what they claim to be, they really need to show that and focus on the real issues.”

Alexis Chilvers, a spokesperson for activist group Labour for Trans Rights, says she felt “utter despondency” on hearing about the change in policy.

“As trans members of Labour, we have a very complicated relationship with the party leadership at large. Things have been getting worse for a long time and there is a certain level of hopelessness over the entire situation,” she tells PinkNews.



Labour leader Keir Starmer has faced criticism for his remarks about trans people.
(Getty)

Chilvers knows people who have cancelled their party membership since Dodds’ article was published, and says: “I don’t blame them because there is very little sign of things getting better in the near future.”

She is now concerned that the party could look at amending the 2010 Equality Act if they win the next general election, to introduce a clear distinction between sex and gender – a view Dodds laid out in her article.

“It’s a really dark chapter for Labour in terms of its push for equality and there’s very little hope that things will get better without us mobilising and taking action,” Chilvers says.

“Labour’s strategy for a long while has been to try to placate both sides of this debate on our existence. They’ve tried to simultaneously proclaim that they stand in support of trans people and our friends – talking about how much they think the GRA should be reformed – but at the same time, the position has been gradually creeping further and further into supporting the gender-critical.”

Chilvers hasn’t been shy about making her views known. She says Labour for Trans Rights has “repeatedly tried to engage in good faith” with Dodds and the wider leadership, but they’ve “never received so much as even an acknowledgement” of their emails.

“No one from the party has ever asked me, as a trans person, what good policy would look like. It shows that so much focus is being put on the GRA and there hasn’t been a single discussion or mention of trans healthcare in general.

Anneliese Dodds Labour

Anneliese Dodds signalled that Labour no longer supports self-ID for trans people..
(Ian Forsyth/Getty Images)

“If you went to most trans people in the UK today and asked them what their number-one concern was, overwhelmingly it would be access to healthcare.”

Her message to the party leadership is loud and clear: “I want you to stop acting like patronising saviours telling us that you’re doing us a favour.

“Listen to trans people. Listen to our experience. Listen to what we have to go through every day because it’s very clear that you’re listening to people who are fundamentally opposed to our existence. We can only keep shouting for so long before our voices will wear out.”

When approached for comment, a spokesperson for Anneliese Dodds said: “Labour regularly engages with stakeholders and party members – including LGBT+ Labour – and has done so throughout this process.”

Another trans member spoke to PinkNews on condition of anonymity, saying they were “fearful of repercussions given the current culture in the party” if they were named.

However, they did tell PinkNews that the party’s position represents a “backwards step”.

They went on: “They’re trying to find a conciliatory position between the trans community and gender criticals.

“That’s as plausible as pigs flying. You either stand with the oppressed or with the oppressor. I understand the instinct to please both sides, but on this you can’t straddle the fence.”

While they are glad Labour recognises the need for the GRA to be updated, they now want the party’s leadership to listen to the community and hear their concerns.

“The shadow front bench should bring together a coalition of trans voices, so we can get this right before a general election.”

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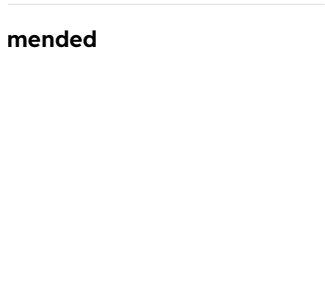
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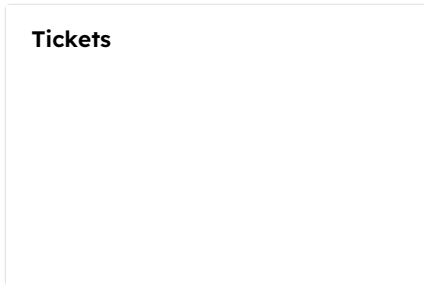


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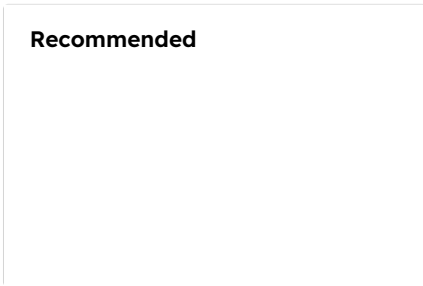
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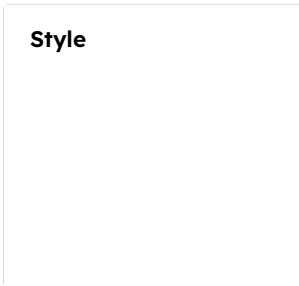
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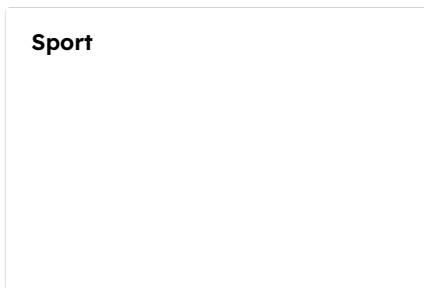
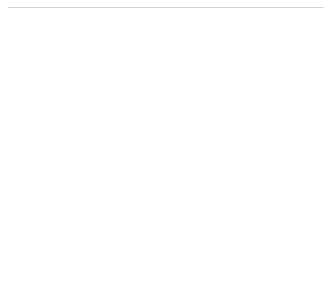
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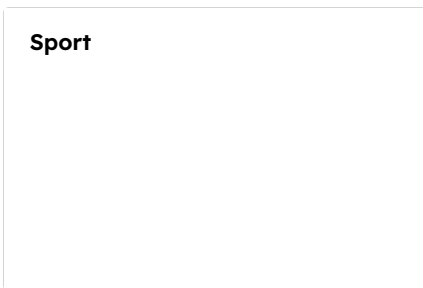
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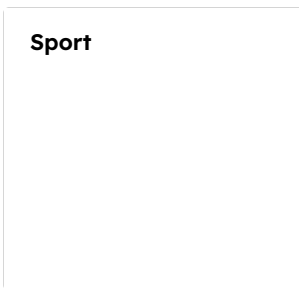
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