

Editorial Guide for Reporting on Sex and Gender Identity Matters

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This guide supports community media reporters in maintaining due accuracy, impartiality, and responsible editorial standards when covering issues relating to sex, gender identity, and public debate following the UK Supreme Court's judgement that "sex" under the Equality Act 2010 means biological sex.

Editorial Principles

Accuracy and Clarity in Terminology

- Use legally accurate language: "sex" refers to biological classification.
- Distinguish carefully between "sex" and "gender identity".
- Base all reporting on primary legal sources and verified information.

Avoiding False Equivalence

- Recognise that evidence-based facts must not be framed as equivalent to unverified or opinion-based claims.
- Reflect the weight of evidence appropriately and avoid artificially balancing conflicting viewpoints where the evidence does not support equal treatment.

Responsibility in Handling Activist Claims

- Treat activist claims as allegations unless independently verified.
- Always seek evidence and state clearly when verification is not possible.

Impartiality and Transparency

- Represent significant viewpoints fairly and proportionately.
- State when matters are contested or unresolved, and avoid presenting them as settled facts.
- Quote and attribute sources accurately, without selective editing.

Use of Clear, Understandable Language

- Avoid jargon and ideological language.
- Follow the Supreme Court's guidance for language that is consistent, purposeful, and understood in ordinary usage.

Editorial Independence

- Uphold the purpose of editorial policies: to inform the public fairly, not to suppress legitimate debate.
- Apply editorial standards consistently across all coverage.

Understanding 'Due' Accuracy and Impartiality

Under the Ofcom Broadcast Code:

- "Due" means appropriate to the subject's importance and context.
- "Due accuracy" requires facts to be correct and supported by evidence.
- "Due impartiality" requires fair treatment of significant views without falsely equating fact and opinion.

The concept of "due" protects journalists from unreasonable demands for artificial neutrality, but it must be applied with integrity and awareness of organisational biases.

Note: These obligations apply to all Ofcom licensed broadcasters but not to newspapers, blogs, or general online publishers.

Alignment with Ofcom Duties

- Rule 5.1: News must be reported with due accuracy and impartiality.
- Rule 5.2: Significant mistakes must be corrected promptly.
- Rules 5.11-5.12: Coverage of controversial matters must reflect a wide range of significant views given due weight.
- Rule 5.13: Personal views must be clearly signposted and distinguished from news reporting.

Final Reminder

Community reporters are responsible for informing the public with clarity, fairness, and factual accuracy. Upholding these principles protects public trust and ensures that community media remain a vital space for democratic engagement and informed debate.