



Keira Bell, 23, who was prescribed puberty blockers at age 16 and later chose to detransition, speaks outside the High Court in London, Britain, on December 1, 2020.

Sharrar Ali responds to the LGBTIQA+ Greens pledge request to leadership candidates. I have chosen to elaborate upon my answers as I believe that Yes/No answers offer limited insight into, or fail to do justice to, often-complex matters. I look forward to having the opportunity to discuss our party positions further at hustings. LGBTIQA+ Greens have asked me to commit to:

1. Campaign with the LGBTIQA+ Greens to protect all LGBTIQA+ communities

I am committed to supporting all these communities, including the lesbian and gay communities who are experiencing particular difficulties at this time. However, I do not always see eye-to-eye with LGBTIQA+ Greens' political statements, especially where I feel party policy would say otherwise or is yet to be democratically approved or established, and so of course will reserve the right not to proactively campaign on matters where reasonable disagreement may occur or persist on what we should be saying.

2. Promise to recognise non-binary identities are valid and promise to ensure they are recognised in internal processes and in wider society.

Before making such a promise, I would welcome a conversation in which we could define our terms and clarify the meaning of this pledge. I was struck by the failure of a trustee of Stonewall, in a recent radio interview, to be able or willing to define "genderqueer" in response to a straight question about a primary school teaching material that was proving controversial. It is not obvious to me that everybody has a gender identity either; many do not even think in those terms, and nor should they be compelled to do so, at least with respect to themselves. The Census 2021 also distinguished between the sex question (compulsory) and the gender identity question (voluntary) and the ONS had to reissue guidance following a successful High Court challenge brought by Fair Play for Women.

3. Support a ban on so-called 'conversion therapy', including that affecting trans and ace people with no exemptions.*

Of course, I deplore so-called conversion therapies of all kinds. I would like to promote a society that encourages individuals to embrace their sex and sexual orientation. In a society where children are exposed to so much safeguarding danger, on-line and off, we should all be campaigning for

improvements to the quality (and quality control) of age-appropriate teaching materials in schools, with a particular focus on mutually respectful, consenting and loving relationships. (PS. would appreciate explanation of your use of the asterisk in “ace*”.)

4. Support increased LGBTIQ+ representation at all levels of government

Yes, I am keen to support the representation of all under-represented groups at all levels of government. However, I do think better legislation needs to be drafted, for example, around the appropriate threshold for opening up all-women shortlists to transgender women, including the difference between legal sex and self-identification as an eligibility criterion. The Sex Discrimination Election Candidates Act 2002, subsequently extended to 2030, refers to reducing inequality between men and women and so its original purpose seems clear. Dedicated legislation for other under-represented groups may be a better way forward and prove less divisive (see Labour’s testy implementation of these shortlists of late).

5. Support gender-affirming healthcare for Trans youth

Gender-affirming healthcare is *not* Green Party policy as such and arguably some current medical practices framed by this approach are contrary to our pre-existing policy, especially practices in the private sector. In particular, I am very concerned about the medical treatment of children who may be questioning their gender identity, or simply be confused about it following unsupervised membership of online forums (e.g. when does change in personality, which may be short-lived, become identity?). I would like to see greater access to counselling and other forms of psychological support for such children. I am opposed to the current trend to prescribe such children drugs that cause irreparable harm, and am even more alarmed by the presence of companies such as Gender GP that have supplied children with such drugs without proper medical supervision or parental consent. I respect the findings of the Keira Bell case, and the current NHS moratorium on puberty blockers, that upheld the principle that generally children cannot be said to have the capacity for informed consent when agreeing to experimental drugs that could lead to further treatment pathways all with irreversible, life-altering effects. We need far better regulation in this area. I recently put an emergency motion to conference in order to have our concerns clearly stated and to affirm the primary duty upon a medical practitioner, first, to do no harm.

6. Call for proper funding for Trans healthcare in the NHS

Yes, of course trans people should receive proper healthcare in the NHS. As with all healthcare provision, resources will have to be shared and prioritised according to clinical need and emergency care. Waiting lists must be reduced across the board and this will benefit all patients, including trans patients.

7. Actively support increased LGBTIQ+ inclusion both within and without the party.

Yes, and I am happy to say that I have received communications indicating that many lesbian and gay people have been joining the Party because they are confident in my support for their rights, as are many current members.

8. Campaign against medically unnecessary surgeries on Intersex children.

Yes, medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex children often betray great ignorance about the condition.