

INFORMATION SHEET FOR JOURNALISTS: Stop Using Transphobic Terms Like “Biological Male”

STOP USING:

- “Biological male” / “Biologically male”
- “Biological female” / “Biologically female”
- “Biological man” / “Biological woman”
- “Genetic male/female”
- “Chromosomal sex”
- “Natal male/female”
- “Biological sex” (as a label for identity)
- “Biological reality” (as a political justification)
- “Trans-identifying male/female”
- “Male/Female bodied”

These terms are not neutral. They are politicised, scientifically misleading, and function as transphobic slurs when used to override someone’s gender identity. They are widely rejected by the trans community, by medical professionals, and by human rights experts.

What You Need to Know as a Journalist

These Terms Are Politically Weaponised, Not Scientifically Accurate

Leading experts and clinicians recently warned the UK Government that terms like “biological sex”, “biological man” and “biological woman” are used not in scientific contexts, but in political ones — specifically to exclude, misgender, and erase trans people.

Trans

Advocacy and Complaints Collective
Unit 150191, PO Box 6945, London, W1A 6US
TACC is an Unregistered Association.

From the expert letter to the Minister for Women and Equalities:

“The terms ‘biological woman’ and ‘biological man’, used by the EHRC and others, are often not used as scientific terms but political ones... sex is not a binary or immutable characteristic.”

The notion of a fixed “biological sex” ignores real biological diversity. Sex characteristics (like chromosomes, hormones, and anatomy) do not always align and can change, including during gender-affirming medical transition.

Best Practice: Use the Right Terms

Use Instead:

- “Trans woman” / “Trans man”
- “Cisgender woman” / “Cisgender man”
- “Assigned male/female at birth (AMAB/AFAB)”
- “Intersex person” (where relevant)
- “Trans person” / “Non-binary person”

These are the medically accurate, community-accepted, and respectful terms in use across clinical, academic, and human rights frameworks.

What the Supreme Court *Actually* Said

Yes, the Supreme Court ruling in *For Women Scotland Ltd v Scottish Ministers* [2025] UKSC 16 defined “sex” in the Equality Act 2010 as meaning “biological sex” for the

narrow purpose of interpreting provisions relating to single-sex services and gender representation on boards, and within groups.

BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN:

- That trans people can be referred to in the press using terms like “biological male/female”.
- Journalists can ignore someone’s gender identity outside of these narrow legal contexts.

This interpretation does not override the rest of the Equality Act, including protections from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation under:

- Section 26 (Harassment)
- Section 13 (Direct discrimination)
- Section 19 (Indirect discrimination)

Referring to a trans woman as a “biological man” in your reporting may meet the threshold for unlawful harassment, particularly if it violates their dignity or creates an offensive environment.

Media Harassment Is Not Protected Speech

Deliberate misgendering or reducing a trans person to “biological sex” labels:

- Violates journalistic ethics on accuracy, fairness, and harm.
- It can amount to harassment under the Equality Act, depending on context.
- Can cause significant emotional, reputational, and professional harm.
- Distorts public understanding of science, medicine, and law.

This Isn't Just About Offence – It's About Harm

Using these terms:

- Frames trans people as deceptive or illegitimate.
- Feeds moral panic around toilets, changing rooms, and public life.
- Endangers trans people, especially women, by implying they are predators or intruders.
- Erodes public support for trans rights by normalising discriminatory narratives.

Reminder: Your Duty as a Journalist

Respect the lived experiences, names, and identities of the people you write about.

Apply the same standards you would for any marginalised community.

Ask yourself:

- Would you quote a racist term to describe a Black person, even if it appeared in a court ruling?
- Would you use a slur to refer to a Jewish or Muslim person, even if an “activist group” claimed it was accurate?

Then don't do it to trans people either.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ The Supreme Court ruling applies only to limited contexts.
- ✓ Trans people are still protected under the Equality Act 2010.
- ✓ Misgendering is *not* protected by the court ruling.
- ✓ Terms like “biological male/female” are widely understood to be transphobic slurs.
- ✓ Journalists have a duty to report ethically, accurately, and without causing unlawful harm.

Questions? Need help updating your language?

We're here to help with terminology, fact-checking, and quote revisions.

Expanded Glossary Of Transphobic Terms & Slurs

[Contact Us](#)