



Operational Compliance Report

Stonewall (1101255)

About the charity

Stonewall Equality is a charity which promotes equality and human rights for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Why we got involved

We received a complaint about the charity's 'Bigot of the Year Award'. The complainant was unhappy that the charity had given the award to the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, because of his stance on same sex marriage. The complainant found the charity's actions offensive and questioned whether a charity should be able to make comments of this kind about a church leader. The award also received some unfavourable press coverage. Charities are free to campaign to further their objects. But when we receive complaints about a charity's campaigning activities, we have to look into the case to make sure that the charity is acting within its objects and in line with our guidance on campaigning and political activity.

The action we took

We opened an operational compliance case and assessed the concerns by looking at what the charity's 'Bigot of the Year Award' aims at achieving and what the charity's objects are.

What we found

We found that the campaign in question was capable of furthering the charity's objects to 'to promote equality and diversity in the United Kingdom and in particular the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation for the benefit of the public'. The charity's objects make clear that one of the ways it will pursue that aim is to 'cultivate a sentiment in favour of equality and diversity by the use of publications, codes of practice, schemes for employers, award schemes, the media and public advocacy'. We concluded therefore that the charity was acting within its objects and that there were no regulatory concerns.

The outcome

We wrote to the complainant explaining why we would take no regulatory action, and recommending that she take her concerns up with the charity's trustees directly. This case demonstrates that part of our value as an independent regulator is that we can set the record straight in cases where a charity has been criticised for actions that, while perhaps controversial, do not conflict with charity law. This does not mean that the Commission in any way endorses or approves of a charity's activities.