# Newcastle United supporter takes legal action against club and police over freedom of speech dispute



Linzi Smith, a 34-year-old Newcastle United supporter, has initiated legal actions against both Newcastle United Football Club and Northumbria Police. Smith was subjected to a four-month investigation by the Premier League due to her gender-critical posts on social media, resulting in the club revoking her membership and banning her from games until 2026. Although Northumbria Police interviewed her under caution for transphobia claims, no legal charges were pursued.

Smith is challenging the ban imposed by the football club and is also seeking to restrict the police from engaging in activities that support trans views, such as participating in Pride events or wearing rainbow symbols. She argues that these activities indicate support for one side of a deeply contested social issue. Smith identifies as a gender-critical lesbian and believes her situation arises from her views on protecting women's spaces.

Smith's legal representation contends that the police have breached their duty of impartiality by supporting Pride and its symbols. This case could set a precedent regarding the political nature of such symbols. Smith's criticism stems from experiencing online abuse and feeling unsafe, exacerbated by the Premier League's detailed investigation into her personal life. She has expressed fears about her safety and the impact on her ability to find employment.

Newcastle United initially banned Smith after a complaint led to an investigation under the club's equality policy. The extensive dossier compiled by the Premier League’s investigation unit, which included personal details about Smith, has drawn comparisons to covert surveillance tactics.

Smith's situation emphasizes a broader dispute over freedom of speech and the balancing of equality policies in public and private sectors.