

Criticism of the NFWI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Glossary

Further to my letter dated 7 February 2023 I am now writing to directly comment on and challenge the 2023 EDI policy and its glossary. This is as per points 22 and 23 of the EDI policy 2023, which states “we encourage open discussion on inclusion” and to put my serious concerns in writing.

There are points in the policy that I feel:

- a. Exclude certain groups of women.
- b. Contradict the policy or constitution.
- c. Are disingenuous.
- d. Are unsubstantiated claims.
- e. Are disrespectful or offensive to women, and or, other groups.
- f. Could cause reputational damage to the WI.
- g. Threaten past or future campaigns.

I have used the terms: exclusionary, contradiction, disingenuous, unsubstantiated, disrespectful, damaging and threatens, with a short explanation of why in each point.

Melissa Green has said in the Guardian “there are no plans to review this policy^[1].” I hope this letter will help to change her views on this. I would also like to request that the NFWI includes other advisors when re-writing the policy, such as Sex Matters, Women’s Declaration International, Transgender Trend and Fair Play for Women.

I would also like to refer to the statement to Federations on 21st April 2023: “transgender women have been welcomed to WIs for decades and our policy, which itself has been in place since the early 21st century, is simply reflective of local practice.” I firmly believe it is not for the National Federation of Women’s Institutes to “simply” reflect back at what is happening at local Women’s Institutes. Their role is to critically assess how this affects the members of Women’s Institutes, taking into account the Equality Act 2010, the opinions of members and potential members and the long and rich history of the Women’s Institute.

The July and August 2021 Edition of WI Life stated “earlier this year we [the NFWI] called in trans education charity Gendered Intelligence to help draft the section on trans gender members in the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy”. I conclude, from cross referencing the policy to the Gendered Intelligence and Stonewall websites that there was no evaluation of how this policy may affect existing members or potential members, nor our history and Constitution.

I would also like to point out that Gendered Intelligence is specifically criticised in “Time to Think” by BBC Newsnight journalist Hannah Barnes. Barnes accuses the organisation of attempting to put pressure on the NHS Gender Identity Development Services (GIDS) to prescribe medical interventions. Gendered Intelligence Chief Executive, Jay Stewart, also targeted a GIDS clinician who promoted a more holistic and therapeutic approach to children and young people presenting with gender distress^[2]. This letter is not the place to criticise other organisations, but it is worth highlighting that those specifically consulted on the policy are not neutral.

Where possible I have sought to include revisions to the policy and its glossary. When I have included these I have referenced UN Women, the Equality Act 2010 and have placed my references at the end of each annex. I have included extra definitions in Annex C, throughout my letter when I use the words ‘woman’ and ‘gender’ I mean these definitions.

I also note that the policy was re-issued in April 2023, but the glossary has not been updated. Therefore I have referred to the policy as 2023 and the glossary as 2021. I am incredibly pleased that the signature page no longer exists, but am disappointed that despite my pointing out the policy contradicts the constitution there is no clarification.

This letter will be published on the wdwi.co.uk website on 14th June 2023.

Annexes:

- A. Specific Criticism of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2023.
- B. Specific Criticism of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Glossary 2021.
- C. Additional Terms To Be Considered for Insertion in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary

References:

- 1. [Women’s Institute will ‘continue to celebrate’ transgender women amid inclusivity row](#)
- 2. Barnes (2023) ‘Time to Think’, Great Britain, Swift. pages 157 and 177 - 178.

Copied to:

Women’s Declaration International UK Co-ordinator

Sex Matters

Fair Play for Women

Women’s Rights Network