



9 June 2023

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for your letter dated 30 May 2023 about the NFWI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (E,D&I) policy. As you have pointed out we encourage open discussion on inclusion and are pleased to engage with members and hear any concerns or suggestions.

Our E,D&I policy, as all our policies, is a living policy, which is reviewed and updated as necessary. The current E,D&I policy was updated in 2019 and launched in 2020. This policy update brought together strands from several different policies and guidance around inclusion, explaining and expanding upon some of our key values and inclusivity. This of course included our transgender policy, which had previously been standalone. The policy was drawn up with reference to the Equality Act 2010, with input from focus groups of WI members, and it was reviewed by our solicitors as part of this process. Significantly though, as you know, our position on transgender membership was not changed in 2019 and has been the same for many years.

As with all our policies, this policy is informed by and supports the Constitution. The WI is open to all women who have reached the age of majority and paid the required subscription fee. All our members meet these criteria.

The statement that 'The WI was founded on democratic ideals over 100 years ago...' is a true reflection of the organisation and its founding principles which are upheld today. We are transparent in our position and ethos and respect every woman's right to assess the WI and decide whether our ethos aligns with hers and she wishes to join.

With regards to the campaigns, we have been campaigning for over 100 years on issues which affect a diverse cross section of women, and we believe that having a diverse membership enriches us. As individuals with different life experiences, not all of our members (or women more broadly) will be affected in the same way by the issues that we campaign on. Having a difference of experience across all our members enriches our

understanding of campaign issues and increases the viewpoints we bring to our campaigns while maintaining the context of a woman only organisation. This applies because no women have had the same life experiences.

We are always open and respectful of feedback from members and we do listen and consider all points raised, but this does not mean we act on all feedback received.

This policy was not drafted or influenced by any other organisations. Input from other organisations helped us ensure our language was up-to-date and respectful of the communities they represent. The WI welcomed transgender members, and had a membership policy to reflect this, long before the 2019/2020 policy was drafted.

Please be assured that all NFWI policies have a robust drafting process which includes input from staff, scrutiny by the relevant Committees and the NFWI Board of Trustees, and review by our solicitors as needed. Considering member needs and feedback is an important part of this process.

Thank you again for your feedback which has provided the opportunity to assess certain aspects of the policy and glossary. We will be updating this in light of some of the points shared. You are right that 'lesbian' of course does need to be added to the glossary and we will reflect on your other suggestions as well.

Yours sincerely,

The NFWI