

3rd May 2025

Dear Sara Kirkpatrick,

I am writing as co-ordinator of the Women's Rights Network in Wales, in conjunction with Merched Cymru, with both of us often working together. Our grassroots organisations represent many women, including women who have been subjected to domestic abuse at the hands of men, and who have needed specialist support at various times in their lives. Considering the statistics, we also represent women who are likely to need such support in the future. All these women are clear on one thing – single sex support services are, or have been, vital to them.

We are therefore writing to seek clarity about certain statements on your website as well as your organisation's policies and practice on single sex spaces and services. The Supreme Court Judgement on the For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers case clarified the meaning of woman in the Equality Act 2010 to mean biological sex. It is therefore vital that WWA alongside other women's organisations in Wales, adhere to the law on women-only, single sex spaces.

With the [EHRC Interim update](#) on the practical implications of the UK Supreme Court judgment now issued we hope that you have taken this as support for you to do what's right for women, and more importantly lawful.

We note that within your 'Transgender Inclusion Statement'¹, you state:

"Welsh Women's Aid supports the continuing need for the provision of specialist services that offer women-only or BME-only support, which is vital to alleviating violence against women, as a form of discrimination, and which is lawful under the Equality Act 2010".

The above statement suggests you are utilising the single sex exemption available under the Equality Act 2010, to ensure that females who require your services can access these, with the assurance that no other person present as a service user or providing that support will be anything other than female. However, your statement also states that WWA:

"commits to supporting the realisation of rights for trans people, and the delivery of trans inclusive services and support, on the basis of self-identification."

With the Supreme Court Judgement clarifying that a woman is a biological woman, not a man who self identifies as a woman, is WWA now going to offer a women-only service as defined in law or continue to offer a mixed sex service?

WWA were included in an open letter from [Karen Ingala Smith](#) covering her concerns of how specialist women's services have failed women miserably and wiped out decades of feminist

¹ [Transgender Inclusion Statement : Welsh Women's Aid](#)

research and practice. We support the letter's contents, especially its assertion that women's organisations such as WWA, who were founded on principles of feminism and women-only spaces are now being replaced by male centric services supporting men who identify as women. It is well evidenced that women-only spaces benefit victim survivors in their recovery from male violence, but this fact is now being erased and forgotten.

As a membership organisation with responsibility for awarding a WWA quality mark to services in Wales, we believe that you have failed to fully articulate the importance of single-sex spaces for women victim-survivors of men's violence. You have made it possible for your member organisations that you award your quality mark to deliver mixed-sex services in the name of transgender inclusivity. You have failed to require such service providers to make clear whether they include men in services that they claim are women only. You have failed to adequately make the case for women-only services to commissioners (especially Welsh Government) and providers of services. In this, we believe that you have failed to act in the best interests of the women that access WWA umbrella organisation services.

We understand that since the ruling, some member organisations have reaffirmed their intention to continue to provide mixed sex support presented as women-only in the name of transgender inclusion. This is not lawful. Further, the failure to provide single-sex services for women and girls may rightly be open to sex discrimination claims. In many cases, the failure to provide single-sex services for women and in doing so meet the needs of women, may be at odds with the organisations' charitable objects which is a legal obligation and would be a failure of governance. We hope in light of the Supreme Court Judgement you take time to reflect.

We would therefore be grateful if you could clarify the following questions:

1. Are you utilising the single sex exemption under the Equality Act 2010 to provide services that are strictly female only?
2. Can women needing the support of Welsh Women's Aid be assured of single sex support free from the presence of men, however those men choose to identify, and regardless of the presence or otherwise of a gender recognition certificate?
3. Are you utilising the single sex exemption under the Equality Act 2010 to recruit and employ staff that are strictly female only?

We look forward to your earliest reply.

Yours faithfully,

Cathy Larkman

WRN Wales

Ali Morris

Merched Cymru

