

Women's Institute will no longer accept trans women as members from April

By Alexandra Topping, *The Guardian*, December 3rd 2025

The Women's Institute will no longer accept transgender women as members from April following the UK supreme court ruling on the legal definition of a woman, the Guardian can reveal.

Melissa Green, the chief executive of the National Federation of Women's Institutes, said the organisation had taken the decision with the "utmost regret and sadness", adding it had "no choice" but to exclude trans women from its membership. "But the message we really want to get across is that it remains our firm belief that transgender women are women, and that doesn't change, Green said.

Membership of the 110-year-old organisation will be restricted to those who are registered female at birth, with new members or those renewing expected to confirm that they meet the criteria.

Responding to the ban, the Trans+ Solidarity Alliance founder, Jude Guaitamacchi, blamed the move on the government's failure to provide clarity. "Imagine being a group that has welcomed trans members for generations being told who you can and cannot associate with, regardless of the wishes of the group itself," they said. "It's cruel and a failure of this government to protect human rights, including freedom of association."

In 2023, the WI said it would continue to "celebrate" the lives of the transgender women, after reports it was facing an attempt by an internal group to overturn inclusive policy – in place since the 1970s and made official in 2015 – which allows transgender members to join the organisation of more than 175,000 members.

In April this year, the supreme court issued a historic and definitive ruling that the terms "woman" and "sex" in the Equality Act refer only to a biological woman and to biological sex. The government is still considering guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on how to apply the ruling.

Asked if the WI was facing legal threats, Green said it had received fewer than 100 pieces of communication on the issue, many from the same people or outside the organisation, but confirmed there had been "reference to legal challenge".

The organisation said it had "a large transgender population" in its membership, but did not have exact numbers of how many people would have to leave. "This has been a very difficult year for everybody, particularly for the transgender community," she said. "But I hope that when that anger subsides the transgender community will know that we stand with them."

On Wednesday, the WI will tell its members – who are part of 5,000 independent local WIs – of the decision in a statement. Transgender WI members known to the leadership team at the organisation had already been informed of the decision before an announcement, said Green.

"They've been so respectful and so understanding of the decision, but profoundly sad," she said. "I spoke to one 80-year-old woman who has been in our organisation for decades, who said it was one of the greatest experiences of her life, and the only place in her 80 years where she's been treated as a woman with respect." [...] She acknowledged that the months after the supreme court decision had been "very difficult", but added: "We're a group of strong women and I know we can find our way through this as well."