

Buckinghamshire Federation of WIs

Equality and Diversity Statement

The purpose of this statement is to mitigate any potential discrimination or unfair treatment against WI members and staff

DEFINITIONS:

Equality is: the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities.

Diversity is: understanding that each individual is unique and recognising our individual differences.

The WI is committed to the principles of equal and diversity and will strive to ensure that no member will be treated less favourably on the following protected grounds:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Or by any other condition that cannot be shown to be justifiable.

(see ACAS *The Equality Act - What's New and What's Changed*)

The WI welcomes members from all communities and will protect them from abuse or harassment.

DISCRIMINATION

The WI recognises that discrimination can take varying forms (see Appendix for examples):

Direct:

- Where a member is treated less favourably than another in the same or similar situation on one of the grounds listed above.

Indirect:

- Where a rule or practice is applied to all but has the effect of disadvantaging a particular group of people compared to others outside the group, unless the rule or practice is needed to achieve a legitimate aim and the means of achieving the aim are appropriate and necessary.

Victimisation:

- Where an individual has taken steps to enforce their rights (or has helped another to do so) and as a result is treated less favourably than those who have not complained.

Harassment:

- Where an individual is subjected to unwanted conduct on a protected ground which has the purpose or effect of violating their dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile humiliating or offensive environment.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The WI acknowledges that treating members equally does not equate to treating all members in the same way, but that their needs can be met in different ways. The WI organisation values diversity and will seek to enable all members to realise their full potential.

Name of Federation/WI.....

Date signed.....

Appendix to the Equality and Diversity Statement

Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination is when a person treats, or proposes to treat, someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic protected by law:

- A craft club committee member organises an outing to a pottery barn, she goes to check out the venue and make the booking. There is no wheelchair access, which is a shame as one of the members uses a wheelchair, but she makes the booking anyway.
- Sara, a transgender woman has recently joined the WI, and is attending her first meeting. She asks another member where the toilets are during coffee time, and is met with an uncomfortable response. The member she has asked expresses that she does not think it is appropriate for Sara to use female toilets.
- Hibba is a Pakistani member of a majority white WI. She wears a hijab, and at one meeting a member asks her intrusive questions about her culture, faith and marriage. This causes her to feel uncomfortable and she leaves the meeting early and does not attend the following month.
- A gay couple have recently become WI members. A senior member at their WI can't get her head around it, and begins to quiz them during coffee time asking them if they are lesbians, because she can't imagine being married to a woman.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination can be a result of a rule that appears to be the same for everyone but in fact disadvantages some:

- A WI committee always hold evening meetings at the President's house, as she doesn't like driving at night. They have a new committee member who only uses public transport, and as there is no evening bus near to the address she cannot attend meetings.
- A WI decides that no one can stand for committee if they are over seventy years old.
- A WI Group is excited to hold their annual group quiz evening. On the letter to invite every WI within the Group there is the following statement "husbands welcome". It should have read "open evening – guests welcome"

Victimisation

Victimisation is the act of singling someone out for cruel or unjust treatment

- A member of a WI feels she is being discriminated against because of her age. She is not allowed to make the tea at her monthly meeting. She made an informal complaint to the president who promised to discuss it at the next committee meeting but now other members are making mocking comments about her age and inability to cope.
- A new mother brings her baby to her WI meeting. During the talk the baby gets restless so the member discreetly breastfeeds her. At the end of the meeting two committee members approach her and ask her not to bring the baby to the next meeting because the speaker was uncomfortable with her breastfeeding the baby.

- Every year Long End WI holds a Christmas party and they always start the party with Christmas carols. One of their newer members is uncomfortable with this as she is an atheist. She speaks to the President who says that they have always sung carols at the Christmas party because the majority of the members are Christian.
- A young member of Middle End WI would like to join the committee. However the committee meetings are always held on a Monday morning. As she works full time she asks if the committee meetings can be changed to late afternoon/early evening so she can attend as well. The President asks the committee members if they are happy to change and most of them are willing to do so. However two long standing committee members refuse to accept the new times and they make the rest of the committee feel so uncomfortable that the changes are not made.
- Two new members join Short End WI. At first they are made very welcome but after attending a number of meetings the President notices that there has been a change of attitude towards them. No one is talking to them and that they are sitting by themselves. At the end of the meeting she asks them if everything is alright and they reply that members have been ignoring them since they announced they were going to get married and they have decided not to attend any more meetings.

Harassment

Harassment is when someone behaves in a way which makes you feel distressed, humiliated or threatened

- The President of a WI ignores her committee and makes all the decisions herself. When the committee question her decisions she gets really angry and questions their loyalty to the WI and to her.
- A WI treasurer has been in the role for some years and feels that only she can manage the finances of the WI successfully. A member offers to help her and the treasurer storms out of the meeting threatening to resign. The member is extremely upset.