

# WOMEN UNITING

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Follow us @WomenUnitingUK

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21st June 2020

## **ARE WOMEN NOT EXTRAORDINARY?**

**Are media outlets continuing to ignore women led organisations in favour of those led by men?**

Last Friday, several news outlets, including the BBC and the Independent, gave prominent coverage to the formation of a cross party political group, representing a number of political LGBT+ groups, calling it **“an extraordinary move”**.

Members of the group said **“This is unique”** (1).

The group had responded to reports that the Minister for Women and Equalities was going to publish her long awaited response to the consultation on reform of the Gender Recognition Act.

We were surprised that the media found this such a significant story, and that the group is claiming this action is ‘unique’, indeed we are baffled as to why it received such a lot of coverage, because cross party groups of **WOMEN** working together on this issue have been studiously ignored.

The fact that we have been doing so for some time is apparently not considered “extraordinary”.

Inspired by ForWomenScotland, who have been working together cross party since mid 2018, **Women Uniting UK** was formed in late 2019, initially as a cross party coalition of women from six major UK political parties.

We published a joint petition on International Women’s Day, the 8th March this year, now signed by over 4000 people with new signatures added every day (2). Thousands more signed the individual political party pledges and petitions.

We sent out a press release announcing this, (attached) to dozens of media outlets and journalists, including a large number at the BBC. It was ignored.

In April, our political alliance was joined by non-party-politically aligned women’s groups, including Fair Play for Women, FiLiA, and the Women’s Human Rights Campaign, to send a joint open letter to the Minister for Women and Equalities, the Rt.Hon Elizabeth Truss. (3)

Again, we tried to get media interest and again we were ignored. Since we shared that letter, more groups have joined us, including Authentic Equity Alliance, For Women Scotland, LGB Alliance, and Transgender Trend among others.

We stand by everything we said in our petition, and in our joint letter.

**We support Liz Truss in saying NO to Self ID and YES to clear and unambiguous guidance on the rights of women and girls to single SEX spaces. This removes rights from no-one.**

We stand united in our defence of the rights of every human being to define themselves as they wish. But we will not allow the rights of women and children to single sex spaces to be removed. Those spaces and services provide safety, dignity, comfort and privacy.

We will not stand by as the power to name ourselves, to count ourselves, to represent ourselves, is removed.

**The word woman is taken.**

(1) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-53101071>

(2) <https://www.change.org/WomenUnitingUKProtectOurSexBasedRights>

(3) <https://filia.org.uk/resources/2020/4/24/letter-to-equalities-minister-for-women>

(Many of the groups mentioned in this letter have written their own open letters, and letters to Liz Truss, their own MPs, MSPs, other political appointees, the Women & Equalities Committee, and the Prime Minister on behalf of their groups and as individuals. We are happy to provide contact details for these groups should you wish to talk to them about their particular views.)

**Joint Political Petition signatories, Women Uniting UK**

**Conservative Women's Pledge**

**Green Feminists Women and Girls Declaration**

**Labour Women's Declaration**

**Liberal Democrats Grassroots Challenge to Policy on Women**

**SNP Women's Pledge**

**Women's Equality Party for Protection of Sex Based Rights**

**Signatories to the letter of 23rd April 2020**

**Women Uniting UK**

**Conservative Women's Pledge**

**Green Feminists Women and Girls Declaration**

**Labour Women's Declaration**

**Liberal Democrats Grassroots Challenge to Policy on Women**

**SNP Women's Pledge**

**Women's Equality Party for Protection of Sex Based Rights**

**Fair Play for Women**

**FILIA**

**WHRC**

**New signatories to this letter**

**Authentic Equity Alliance**

**For Women Scotland**

**LGB Alliance**

**Transgender Trend**



## WOMEN UNITING CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT OUR SEX-BASED RIGHTS

### Protecting Single Sex Spaces

23 April 2020

Dear Liz Truss,

We are very pleased that you have announced that any reform to the Gender Recognition Act will **protect single sex spaces**.

Single sex spaces are part of every day life for men and women, boys and girls - wherever they need to wash, undress and undertake bodily functions in privacy. This includes in school, college and universities, leisure facilities and parks, shopping centres and workplaces. Single sex spaces also include more specialist services such as women's refuges, hospital wards, and mental health facilities.

While social distancing has meant that much of this shared world is currently out of bounds, we will return to life together.

Everyday single sex spaces are particularly important for women and girls. The question about whether a space is single sex or mixed sex shouldn't be ambiguous to customers or to staff. Everyone deserves peace of mind, and to be treated with respect.

Clarity about single sex spaces is crucial for individual dignity, and opportunity as it ensures that people of both sexes and people of all religions, and ages are able to access work, education and leisure opportunities which would not be available to them if they could not undress without assurance of not being overlooked by members of the opposite sex. People receiving intimate care in elderly care homes should be able to know and acknowledge the sex of their carers.

### The right to privacy

The aim of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 was to enable a person who has chosen to live permanently as if they were the opposite sex to be able to have a degree of privacy. It was developed following a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights (Goodwin v UK [2002]) where it was found that it was a breach of Human Rights Article 8 (**respect for private and family life**) for a post operative transsexual to have to reveal their biological sex by showing their birth certificate to apply for insurance, mortgages and pensions.

The ruling did not require that anyone be allowed to share intimate spaces with members of the opposite sex without their consent, whether they had or hadn't had medical treatment or surgery. Everyone has a **right to respect for private and family life** which includes bodily privacy.

Single sex services are provided for by the Equality Act in several different circumstances, such as different needs and efficiency. One of the most common reasons for single sex spaces is ordinary bodily privacy as set out in Schedule 3, paragraph 27 (6): circumstances where a person of one sex might reasonably object to the presence of a person of the opposite sex.

This covers everyday situations such as showers, changing rooms and toilets. Such single sex spaces are widely provided but service providers have become nervous of saying clearly that they are single sex; leaving it ambiguous, or believing they must be 'inclusive' based on gender identity. Even worse, some service providers treat someone who reasonably objects to being surprised, confused or upset to find a member of the opposite sex in a 'single sex' space with them as hostile.

Instead of this, unisex and single-user alternatives are a straight-forward solution for accommodating anyone who doesn't want to use single sex spaces with their own sex (without invading anyone's privacy by enquiring whether they have had intimate surgery or not). This is helpful for transgender people (including those who identify as non-binary) as well as parents with children of the opposite sex. It protects everyone's dignity and privacy.

We are writing to you as groups of women organising, from across all political parties and none. We hope you will be able to build cross-party consensus on this area where clarity and respect is needed for all service users as well as frontline staff.

We will be writing to you separately in the coming days with further thoughts on reform of the GRA and single sex spaces.

**Conservative Women's Pledge** @CUPWomensPledge

**Fair Play For Women** @Fairplaywomen

**FiLiA** @FiLiA\_charity

**Green Feminists**

**Labour Women's Declaration** @LabWomenDec

**Liberal Democrats Sex Based Declaration**

**SNP Women's Pledge** @WomensPledge

**Women's Equality Party Women** @WepWomen

**Women's Human Rights Campaign** @DeclarationOn

**Women Uniting** @WomenUnitingUK

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## WOMEN UNITING CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT OUR SEX-BASED RIGHTS

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020, International Women's Day, UK**

Over the past few months, women from many political parties have launched petitions in support of the sex-based rights of women and girls.

Those parties included Labour, the SNP, Greens, Liberal Democrats, Conservatives, and the Women's Equality Party.

The petitions have received thousands of signatures, from party members, office holders, and representatives, as well as the general public.

Today we launch our cross party petition, by women, for women, **Women Uniting UK**.

Via our petition, we are asking some very specific questions of the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP, Minister for Women and Equalities;

**We call upon the government, specifically the Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP, Minister for Women and Equalities, to commit to the following:**

**Clarify and further enshrine in law the legal definitions of 'Woman' and 'Sex' in order to make current legislation clear and unambiguous and ensure data used to inform government policy is correctly recorded.**

**Publish guidance explaining and enforcing the single sex exemptions in the Equality Act 2010. A new statutory Code of Practice must help everyone be clear on what “single sex” means, as recommended by the Women and Equalities Select Committee in July 2019.**

**Ensure all new laws, amendments, and policies are assessed for their impact on 51% of the population, women and girls.**

We are not asking for new rights, we are not asking for extra rights; we are asking that the rights we already have in law are clarified and upheld.

<https://www.change.org/WomenUnitingUKProtectOurSexBasedRights>