



SISTERHOOD GROUPS GUIDELINES – KEY MESSAGES FOR COMMS

Why and what are Sisterhood Groups?

Sisterhood groups are a way to extend the support and welcome of the WI out to wider communities. They are a 'sub-group' run by WIs very much like the huge variety of groups already running – from craft to book groups and even wild swimming.

They also build on our successful network of Prison WIs and Conversation Cafes.

Sisterhood groups were created as a way to keep offering support and welcome to transwomen who have been part of the WI movement for decades.

These groups will be open to all, and will be spaces for people to come together to socialise, learn from each other, and share their experiences of living as women. We chose the term "Sisterhood" as it is a word already widely used by members of the WI, and describes the camaraderie and friendship felt by all women who are part of our movement.

Who is running Sisterhood Groups, and are they mandatory?

The groups are optional, and will be run by the volunteer teams of our WIs or federations.

A decision to create one will be put to a vote by the WI members concerned.

Sisterhood Groups will be grassroots, and not operated on a national level nor run by a national headquarters. These groups are very much rooted in the desires and choices of individual groups and the needs of their communities.

A Sisterhood Group will be attached to a specific WI, and a group facilitator – a voluntary role held by a local member – will co-ordinate the group's activities.

Isn't this allowing transwomen to enter the WI through the side door? And therefore, contravening UK law?

We are clear on this point. It is with regret and sadness that we announced in December 2025, that from April 2026, we could no longer offer formal membership to transgender women. As an organisation that has proudly welcomed transgender women into our membership for more than 40 years, this is not something we would do unless we felt that we had no other choice.

However, we must act - and are acting - in accordance with the Supreme Court's judgment and restricting formal membership to women registered female at birth (biological women). This change is only in respect to our membership policy, and does not change our firm belief that transgender women are women.

Local, grassroots, Sisterhood Groups support members – *if they wish* – to reach out to transwomen as part of wider community engagement and cohesion, as other sub-groups have done. These groups are outside WI membership and must be open to all.

Who is funding these Sisterhood Groups?

Sisterhood groups must be self-funding and are aligned to the WIs or federations that create them. Income and expenditure for Sisterhood groups is accounted for in the same way as other sub-groups.

If members of the public, media, or other public stakeholders have questions about WI Sisterhood Groups, they are free to contact NFWI via Inclusion@NFWI.org.uk.