

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP
Prime Minister and Minister for the Civil Service
10 Downing St

29th December 2025

Dear Sir Keir

Fifty years ago today the Sex Discrimination Act came into force, to address the unequal status of women in work, training, education, and as users of facilities and services. It outlawed discrimination based on sex, while allowing single-sex services, charities, schools, colleges and sports.

In the House of Lords, Dr Shirley Summerskill presciently warned that across the civil service, business, industry and the church “every manœuvre and trick” would be “deployed to evade the provisions of this Bill, for there are those who are determined to cheat women, just as we have been cheated since the 1919 Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act.”

The Supreme Court’s judgment in *For Women Scotland* confirmed that women have been cheated and tricked for the past 15 years through a systemic misinterpretation of the sex-discrimination provisions in the Equality Act.

It should be clear and obvious that services for women and girls – including facilities for everyday privacy, such as changing rooms, showers and toilets; schools, sports, charities and positive action for women and girls; and women’s refuges, rape crisis centres and prisons – are for women (often at their most vulnerable). These are not facilities for men, including cross-dressing men or transsexual men.

No service user or staff member should face abuse, hostility or discipline for being clear about this. Yet women up and down the country face victimisation simply for asserting their boundaries and rights.

This is institutionalised sexism of the kind that the Sex Discrimination Act sought to outlaw.

You have pledged to make the UK one of the safest places in the world for women and girls, and to address the misogyny and inequality that underpins male violence against women. Yet your

Sex Matters is a human-rights charity promoting clarity about sex in law, policy and language
sex-matters.org | info@sex-matters.org

Trustees: Emma Hilton (chair), Michael Biggs, Rebecca Bull, Charlotte Cadden, Julia Casimo, Anya Palmer
CEO: Maya Forstater

government has taken no action to stop the Equality Act being evaded, including within the civil service.

As the Supreme Court concluded, the sex-discrimination provisions in the Act “are incoherent and unworkable unless woman and man have their biological meaning”. The Government Equalities Office has been promoting an incoherent misunderstanding of the Act across Whitehall for over a decade. The excuses with which the government, charities and regulators have responded to the Supreme Court judgment since April 2025 show not caution but recalcitrance.

The Secretary of State for Women and Equalities has described single-sex services as “trans exclusive” in court. She is delaying the finalisation of the EHRC code of practice.

Meanwhile government departments continue to apply the “Civil Service Gender Identity and Intersex model Policy”, which defines “refusing to accept an individual’s gender identity” as “transphobia” and using a word “which does not correctly reflect an individual’s gender identity” as “misgendering”. It says that “deliberate, continued and/or repeated incidents are unacceptable and should be dealt with using the bullying, harassment and discrimination policy.”

These edicts, issued under the previous government, conflict with the Equality Act. They make it impossible to understand, communicate or enforce clear sex-based rules without being accused of bullying. Indeed the policy explicitly says people should be allowed to choose which facilities to use.

The question of whether services for women are for women, or for women plus men with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, is simple, and the Supreme Court has already answered it.

The answer is not popular with groups such as Trans Bash Back, which has responded with a show of force, attacking a feminist conference, the Equality and Human Rights Commission's offices and Wes Streeting MP’s constituency office. We call on you to stand up to groups that seek to undermine the Equality Act.

Women saying No to men invading their spaces and services are not bullying; they are being bullied by a class of people who are both physically and economically more powerful than women, and who continue to have the state, the church, trades unions and civic institutions behind them.

The civil-service model policy is unlawful and should be withdrawn immediately.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maya Forstater". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maya Forstater
CEO