

Paper Q1

Response to the impact of single-sex court rulings on transgender people and their communities

URC Youth Executive

Basic information

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Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Resolution 63 The URC recognises the profound challenges and agonising decisions faced by organisations such as Girlguiding and the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) as they have responded to recent rulings and definitions regarding biological sex. Resolution 64 The URC expresses deep pastoral concern for those affected by the decisions regarding trans rights made by Girlguiding and similar organisations in response to the Supreme Court ruling regarding gender identity.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	It outlines the recent landmark UK Supreme Court ruling that redefined "sex" within equality law, details how this forced major changes in long-standing inclusive policies within organisations like Girlguiding and the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI), and explains the urgent pastoral need for the URC to affirm its commitment to trans and non-binary individuals during a time of significant institutional exclusion.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Paper E2 Equalities Committee: Affirming the human dignity of transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming people. General Assembly 2023.
Consultation has taken place with...	Youth Executive, Faith in Action Committee

Summary of impact

Financial	N/A
External (e.g., ecumenical)	

The current legal situation

The structural shift impacting inclusive youth and civic organisations stems directly from a major legal milestone in UK equality law:

- The Supreme Court Ruling (April 2025): In the landmark case *For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers*, the UK Supreme Court clarified a fundamental definition within the Equality Act 2010. The Court ruled that the terms "sex", "man", and "woman" refer strictly to biological sex (sex assigned at birth), rather than gender identity, even if an individual holds a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC).
- The EHRC Code of Practice (May 2026): Following the ruling, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) updated its statutory Code of Practice. The code established that if an organisation operates or registers as a "single-sex service" or "single-sex association" under the law, it cannot legally admit individuals of the opposite biological sex, regardless of their gender identity or lived gender.

The Legal Tension: While the ruling does not diminish protections against discrimination on the grounds of "gender reassignment," it effectively forced single-sex charities to make a choice: either redefine themselves legally as fully mixed/gender-neutral spaces or enforce strict biological boundaries to protect their legal status as single-sex institutions.

The institutional response: Girlguiding and the WI

Faced with this legal reality and governing charity documents tied strictly to the advancement of girls and women, several long-standing institutions reluctantly altered their policies, including Girlguiding and the Women's Institute:

- Girlguiding UK Policy Shift (December 2025 / March 2026): For years, Girlguiding operated an inclusive policy allowing trans girls to participate fully. However, following expert legal advice regarding the Supreme Court decision, Girlguiding announced that it could no longer legally permit trans girls and trans women to join or volunteer in female-only roles.
 - The September 2026 Deadline: In March 2026, Girlguiding set a firm deadline of 6 September 2026 for current trans youth members to leave the organisation and for trans adult volunteers to be moved out of women-only positions into mixed-gender roles.
- The National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI): Similarly, the WI, which had officially welcomed trans women since 2015, announced that beginning in

April 2026, new and renewing members must confirm their biological sex at birth, explicitly ending their formal inclusion of trans women.

Leaders from both organisations expressed immense sadness, noting that the ripple effects of the Supreme Court ruling left them "no choice" if they wished to operate lawfully under their current charitable frameworks.

The pastoral and theological concern for the URC

The URC has a historic and explicit commitment to being an open, welcoming, and justice-seeking Church. This resolution is brought to the General Assembly not to litigate secular charity law, but to address the profound human fallout of these systemic changes.

The Impact on young people

The upcoming September 2026 deadline means that transgender children across the UK are currently navigating a highly distressing, forced exit from safe peer groups, weekly routines, and communities where they felt empowered. The psychological and emotional toll on these children and their families is immense.

Theological grounding

As a Church, our response must always be anchored in the radical hospitality of Christ.

- We look to scripture (Leviticus 19:34, Matthew 25:35), which calls God's people to love the vulnerable, welcome those on the margins, and see the divine image in all people.
- This resolution builds directly upon the resolution at the General Assembly in 2023, which affirmed that transgender and non-binary people are gifts to the Church to be celebrated, and that the URC stands with them in times of hurt.

Conclusion and actionable intent

Voting FOR this resolution does not challenge the rule of law or condemn Girlguiding, whose leaders faced agonising institutional constraints. Rather, it publicly signals that the United Reformed Church:

- Acknowledges the pain, alienation, and grief currently experienced by trans youth and volunteers who are being excluded from spaces they loved.
- Encourages local URC pastorates to actively step into the gap, ensuring our own youth groups, pilots, and church provisions remain safe, explicitly trans-affirming, and unconditionally welcoming sanctuaries.
- Encourages our pastoral teams to provide intentional care for individuals and families navigating these difficult transitions over the coming months.