

NWC Member Charter

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1. What is NWC's Member Charter?

- 1.1. The National Women's Council (NWC) is the leading representative organisation working for women's rights and equality across the island of Ireland, founded in 1973. Our work is rooted in our membership. Our members support us to represent the diversity of women's lived experience, to build solidarity and to promote dialogue, reflection and debate. Our members actively participate and shape NWC's policy and are centrally involved in our campaigns and advocacy work at all levels.
- 1.2. This Member Charter was developed within the overall context of our Membership Strategy (2020-2025) which seeks to strengthen the mandate of NWC and build a strong sense of ownership of and investment in NWC amongst our members.
- 1.3. Our Member Charter oversees the relationship between NWC and our members. It does not apply to relationships between members.
- 1.4. Our Member Charter explains what it means to be a member of the National Women's Council and what we aim to achieve working together. It aims to protect NWC's vision, mission and values and ensure a fair, transparent and respectful communication and engagement between NWC and our members. Every member must sign up to the Member Charter once, either when they apply or when they renew their membership.

2. NWC vision, mission and values

- 2.1. The vision of the National Women's Council is a feminist Ireland that is just and caring, where everyone thrives. This vision shapes and informs our work, and, with our values, how we work.
- 2.2. We are a movement-building organisation rooted in our membership, working on the whole island of Ireland. We are also part of the international movement to protect and advance women's and girls' rights.
- 2.3. Our purpose is to lead action for the achievement of women's and girls' rights and equality through mobilising, influencing, and building solidarity.
- 2.4. Our values guide us. They are given expression in our work, and in how we work, as an organisation.
- 2.5. We are committed to these living values:
 - **Feminist:** In all of our work, we acknowledge the unfair systems and barriers that all women face, no matter our differences. We work together to empower women to lead the changes needed for women's rights and equality. We focus on supporting women who have the least access to power.
 - **Inclusive:** We understand that women and girls are all different, and many will face different forms of discrimination at the same time, including but not limited to discriminations based on race, ability, sexual orientation, class, gender expression and ethnicity. We pro-actively include women from diverse backgrounds and offer extra support to those who might face more challenges in getting involved in our work. We are aware of potential bias and check our own institutional privilege and power.
 - **Courageous:** We stand firm on women's rights and equality and challenge those in positions of power who undermine or oppose our campaign for positive change. We do not shy away from having tough conversations and speak up when it is needed. We try out new ways of working, embrace mistakes as learning opportunities and nurture a culture of self-reflection.

- **Caring:** We recognise care as essential to life, rooted in our interdependence with each other and the planet, and as a collective force that sustains people and communities. We recognise and value care in all its forms. We recognise the connections between gender, care, and the environment. We advocate for policies that put care at the heart of economic, social, and environmental systems. We foster an organisational culture that prioritises the well-being of staff and members; care starts within.
- **Strategic:** To be successful in achieving our goals, we are thoughtful and plan carefully. This means showing leadership, working well with partners, and focusing on what matters most. It means making choices that are achievable/realistic and will help us in the future.

3. Your role as a member of the National Women's Council

3.1. Be involved

Our members are directly involved in setting the policy of the organisation. As a member, we ask you to respect and support our work and values.

3.2. Work with us

We invite you to take part in our consultations, policy development and campaigning work.

Engage with us: We hope you will engage with our staff and other members in our:

- communications such as our weekly supporter emails
- events such as our campaign launches
- meetings such as our Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Feedback from your organisation: We encourage you to tell us about knowledge and feedback you have from your organisation's work and from your members. This will help us to develop submissions and our campaigns.

Vote at AGM: After you have been a member for one year, at our AGM you can take part by:

- submitting motions
- voting on motions
- voting in elections.

Respect our decisions: Please respect our democratic decision-making processes and the results of votes at our AGM. This is how we decide on our advocacy work and campaigns.

Contact information: We ask you to give us your up-to-date contact information. We ask you to include at least one official nominee from your organisation with a phone number and email address.

Membership fee: Please, pay your membership fee on time, or let us know if your organisation experiences financial difficulty.

4. How NWC engages with our members

Our members support us when we work to:

- represent the diversity of women's life experience
- build solidarity
- promote dialogue, debate and reflection.

Our members take part in the organisation and shape our policy. They are involved in our campaigns and advocacy work at all levels.

4.1. Doing the work our members vote for

Your feedback and motions voted on at our AGM inform our work. This means we are all responsible for and invested in what we want to achieve.

4.2. We encourage you to contribute

We commit to engaging with our members in a fair, equal and transparent way. We provide regular opportunities for members to:

- inform and shape our policies
- engage in our work
- receive information.

We create networking opportunities and promote our members' work, where possible.

4.3. **Practical tools to help you take part**

We provide regular opportunities for our members to take part in our policy development and consultations.

Inform: We inform our members about opportunities to:

- engage in our work
- engage in external consultations.

Communicate: We make our communications as accessible as possible. We structure our communications to make sure women in all their diversity can take part.

Respond: We reply to members' queries and requests in a timely and respectful manner.

Respect decisions: We respect the decision making processes of our members in arriving at their own positions. In case of disagreement or conflict between NWC and a member, we engage in respectful communication.

Encourage involvement in decision making: We encourage our members to get involved in our democratic decision-making processes. This includes:

- proposing and voting on motions at the AGM
- putting forward nominations for the Board of NWC.

Update: Through our supporter emails, we provide regular updates on our work and campaigns.

Support your work: When your campaigns, events and initiatives are in line with our priorities and policy positions, we will support you. We do this, for example, by promoting an event or communication on our social media.

Feedback and complaints: If you wish to provide feedback or make an official complaint about NWC, you can do so in line with [NWC's Feedback and Complaints Policy](#).

5. How we create inclusive and respectful discussions

5.1. Welcoming and empowering

We are an inclusive organisation. We make sure our meetings and events are welcoming and empowering. We aim to create meaningful and respectful discussion and exchanges.

All our members commit to the following rules for NWC's events, meetings and spaces.

- Facilitate and encourage everyone to take part.
- Listen respectfully and actively.
- Critique ideas, not individuals.
- Be open to diverse views and constructive debate.
- Avoid blame, speculation and inflammatory language.
- Avoid making assumptions about others and stereotyping.
- Respect any specific ground rules agreed when attending a meeting or consultation, for example, to keep the contents of the meeting confidential.

6. Breaching the Member Charter – Conflict Resolution Process

6.1. Conflict resolution

If a member breaches this Charter, we reserve the right to start our conflict resolution process.

6.2. Our Board may start the conflict resolution process in the following situations

False claims: When a member deliberately makes false claims about NWC.

Deliberate harm: Using language or actions to deliberately harm or embarrass NWC.

Hateful and hostile language: If a member uses language that is likely to cause prejudice or violence against a group or individuals based on:

- disability
- race
- colour
- ethnic identity
- religion
- nationality
- gender
- gender expression or identity
- sexual orientation.

Incitement: If a member does anything that encourages hatred, or violence, or both.

Abusive references: If a member makes abusive reference to named Board or staff members on social media or in the public domain.

Meetings, events and spaces: If a member seriously or repeatedly breaches the rules for our events, meetings and spaces.

Other actions and behaviour: We may also act if there is evidence of other behaviour or actions that our Board believes is incompatible with our ambition, purpose, values and this Member Charter.

6.3. **Informal if possible**

When we find that a member has broken the rules of the Member Charter, we will try to resolve the issue as informally as possible. Where this fails or the Board feels an informal approach is inappropriate, our Board may decide to start a formal process.

6.4. **Membership may be revoked**

In the unlikely event where all efforts to resolve the issue through this formal process have failed, our Board may decide to take away membership of NWC. If we do, a member can ask for the issue to be referred to an independent arbitrator. The independent arbitrator will investigate the issue and decide in a respectful, timely, and transparent way.

6.5. **Reapply after 12 months**

If membership is taken away due to a breach, a member may reapply after 12 months for consideration by NWC's Board.