I find it disturbing that the Scottish Government funded organisation Engender, supposedly existing as the feminist advocacy voice for women and girls in Scotland, said this in a blog letter to Joan McAlpine MSP “We neither ‘represent women and girls’ nor make any claim to’. ¹

If Engender don’t speak solely for women and girls, then they are not an organisation which represents women and girls’ rights enough.

In addition, other Scottish Government funded women’s organisations, including Scottish Women’s Aid, are further having to degrade women’s rights to access safe spaces due to the Scottish Government imposing a requirement to access funding being that organisations must have a ‘transwoman inclusive’ policy. This is known to have or would have, through conversations with users and ex-users of these services, prevented women from accessing these services.

Further to this, Scottish Government departments replies to numerous concerned citizens re this demand of trans-inclusiveness, have used sophistry to deny their funding policy, claiming no funding to any women’s organisations is dependent upon the inclusion of transwomen who self-id. I believe this is deceptive.

The Equality Act 2010 is clear that women-only spaces have the legal right to refuse access to males but how many will exercise that right if their funding is dependent upon not doing so?

I believe the Scottish Government strategy of forcing Scottish women’s organisations to compromise their integrity, ethos and client base, in order to access much needed funding, has resulted in there being no publicly funded organisations in Scotland which speak or act exclusively for the rights of women and girls in Scotland.

Funding any group should be contingent upon that group evidencing that they have consulted with the core client group they claim to represent, yet as can be seen in the Engender link provided earlier, this is patently not happening.

The lack of oversight in equity of funding can be seen by the beneficially disproportionate funding going towards LGBT groups whilst the LGBT Youth transgender schools’ guidance I believe took no notice of the detriment to the rights of girls. A clash of rights, with transgender rights once again trampling female rights.

Scottish Government funding in Scotland for women’s groups is now dependent upon adopting a ‘transwomen inclusive’ policy, however Stonewall Scotland need no such pressure. Any funding used for ‘lesbian’ groups by them is used only to promote, fund lesbian groups which include males who claim to be lesbian. This

results in there being no SG funding for yet another subgroup of women...lesbians.

There are grassroots organisations such as ForWomenScot and Women and Girls Scotland who are desperately trying to preserve, and have reinstated, the rights of women and girls in our country. They receive no funding from the Scottish Government, relying on donations and activism from individual supporters, and in fact get little acknowledgement from MSPs when asking to meet with them.

This is especially true of the FM Nicola Sturgeon and Shirley Anne Somerville who often publicly and privately cite the Yogyakarta Principles as 'best practice', despite remaining unadopted by the UN and unrecognised in International Human Rights law, and of Scottish Government MSPs who have met trans-groups approx. 18 times this year alone, yet have not met with the women’s groups mentioned here earlier.

This is certainly not best practice for women and girls in Scotland.

I will finish by saying women and girls need a Scottish Government funded organisation which works solely for the betterment & empowerment of the female sexed humans known as women and girls, in Scotland. That works to overcome the systemic male bias inherent in our society, our institutions and communities.

To that end I urge you to endeavour to ensure that Scottish Government funding to women’s organisations is not dependent upon having a ‘transwomen inclusive policy’, but that has nothing against a trans-inclusive policy which keeps services single sex, and that further funding is set aside for the exclusive purpose of creating a Scottish advocacy group for women and girls, or to fund an existing unfunded group which advocates only for the rights of women and girls.