

30 January 2025

To: **Sarah Owen MP**, Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee

Alex Brewer MP

David Burton-Sampson MP

Rosie Duffield MP

Kirith Entwistle MP

Natalie Fleet MP

Catherine Fookes MP

Christine Jardine MP

Samantha Niblett MP

Shivani Raja MP

Rachel Taylor MP

Dear all,

We are writing to you on the one-year anniversary of the publication of the Misogyny in Music Report from the Women and Equalities Committee (WEC, 2024). The report marked an important step in acknowledging and making visible the deep-seated misogyny in the music industry and music education. Yet a year on from the publication of the report to our knowledge there has been little progress on implementing most of the recommendations in the 2024 Report. We support the WEC's decision to revisit the inquiry in a follow-up session on 28 January 2025, with a view of planning next steps. As evidence shows, matters are not improving. We are therefore collectively writing to the WEC to ask for support in actioning these recommendations and holding the music industry and education bodies accountable. We are musicians, activists, researchers, and industry insiders who are working to bring about change in the industry from the following organisations:

The Centre for Music Education and Social Justice at the University of Southampton hosted a study day in November 2024 on the Misogyny in Music report which has catalysed the discussions that led to this letter, organised by Dr Erin Johnson-Williams and Dr Chiying Lam.

The F-List for Music (The F-List) is a not-for-profit Community Interest Company representing over 5,840 women and gender-diverse musicians in the UK (currently 4,362 musicians and 1,482 groups, plus 381 music companies representing women and gender-diverse musicians), who as an important strand of its activities run a Gender in Music Research Hub with 81 gender-in-music academics and researchers. Board directors Vick Bain and Dr Metka Potočnik submitted written and oral evidence in the original inquiry.

The 1752 Group is a campaigning and research organisation working to address sexual misconduct in higher education, and director Dr Anna Bull also carries out research and activism in the classical music industry and music education.

The Institute of Contemporary Music Performance is widely regarded as one of Europe's leading schools of modern music, with Professor Sophie Daniels Head of School; Music Performance and Creation at ICMP and is also a director of The F-List.

Together we are writing to request that the WEC run a series of follow-up sessions to monitor and incentivise uptake of the recommendations from the Report. In addition, we invite the WEC to explore further emerging issues that were not covered in the 2024 Report: first, how the music industry is implementing the 2024 Worker Protection Act; second, what is the role of contracts and copyright in the systemic discrimination against women and gender-diverse people in the sector and third, the impact of Artificial Intelligence and in particular AI Bias on the music sector. Specifically, we ask for the following should be addressed:

1. Updates and next steps for actioning recommendations in the 2024 Report.

We propose that the WEC call organisations named in the thirty-four recommendations to a session to submit evidence and answer questions on their progress. Where recommendations did not name specific organisations or routes for implementing these, such as in the first recommendation aimed at music colleges, conservatoires and other educational settings, WEC should identify appropriate organisations to be invited to share data on how they are monitoring gender inequality among their programmes. Such evidence should facilitate a discussion regarding their actions aimed to address the issues raised in each individual recommendation. In music education, appropriate bodies could be Music Mark, Arts Council England, the National Music Service for Wales, the Scottish Government's Youth Music Initiative programme, Conservatoires UK, and the Arts and Humanities Research Council/UK Research and Innovation.

2. Monitoring how music industry employers are implementing the 2024 Worker Protection Act

On 26 October 2024, the Worker Protection Act introduced a specific duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment from occurring in the course of their employment – including for self-employed workers who are personally contracted to carry out work. The accompanying guidance from the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) goes some way towards addressing some of the recommendations from the Misogyny in Music report. As the guidance outlines,

'The duty requires that employers should anticipate scenarios when its workers may be subject to sexual harassment in the course of employment and take action to prevent such harassment taking place. However, if sexual harassment has taken place, the preventative duty means an employer should take action to stop sexual harassment from happening again' (3.18).

This guidance notwithstanding, we have serious concerns about the levels of employers' implementation of this preventative duty. Furthermore, we have concerns that the Equality and Human Rights Commission's enforcement powers – which are weaker than the those of the Health and Safety Executive's – are insufficient to ensure compliance. This is a particularly urgent issue as the UK is a signatory to the International Labour Organization's 2019 [Convention C190](#) which pledges to extend or adapting 'existing occupational safety and health measures to cover violence and harassment and developing specific measures where necessary'.

We therefore propose that the WEC coordinate a session with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to investigate plans on the enforcement of the Worker Protection Act, as well as calling on leading music industry employers to explain whether and how they are implementing the Act's provisions.

3. New issues: contracts, copyright, and AI

The 2024 Report represents an impressive body of work, embedded in important empirical evidence from multiple stakeholders. The WEC found that the industry is plagued with power differentials and that it is mostly men who hold power in the sector. To fully understand the origins of this power, we invite the WEC to follow the money. Contracts or copyright rules have not (yet) been investigated by the WEC. Instead, intellectual property law has been (mistakenly) used to justify a possible legitimate use for non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). The extent to which copyright and contracts are being used to control women and gender-diverse musicians, should be a specific question, for WEC to put to the current gatekeepers, who hold all the power in the system. Record labels and music publishers, whose business models heavily rely on copyright and contractual transfers of IP onto them, are still dominated by white men. This additional avenue of investigation would also follow the recommendations of the 2023 World Intellectual Property Organization's Gender Action Plan, which asks all its members (UK is a WIPO member), to start collecting gender-specific data that will inform IP policymaking.

Power structures are also informed by the essential standard technologies, underpinning the infrastructures of how we make, share, and use music. Much of this remains hidden in today's digital, online space. Reports from the community show that Artificial Intelligence is not gender-neutral, and that there are real risks to women and gender-diverse musicians. These are two-fold: first, questions must be asked about the AI bias, which remains an underexplored topic. Because AI models use past data to learn, the current gender and intersectional inequalities will be reproduced to the AI generated systems, infrastructures or works. We already have reports of under-representation of women on AI generated playlists on largest streaming services. In addition, however, members are reporting concerns about their future work opportunities being deleted and women's voices in music, being replaced by AI generated voices, in the hands of the male producers (AI created voices to suit the male gaze). We invite the WEC to investigate the potential harms and risks of AI in the music sector.

We would be interested to meet and discuss how to take forward this agenda.

Below you will also find a list of signatories, who all support this call, to ensure the opportunities for change and transformation contained in the 2024 Report will not have been squandered.

[List of all who are signing with us]

Dr Anna Bull, Senior Lecturer in Education and Social Justice @ University of York and Director of The 1752 Group

Dr Catherine Anne Davies, Award winning Record Producer, Recording Artist and Educator, Ivor's Senator

Dr Chiying Lam, Lecturer in Community Music @ Southampton Centre for Music Education and Social Justice

Daisy Swift, Musician / Director of Learning Wigmore Hall / PhD researcher @ the University of Sheffield

Dr Erin Johnson-Williams, Lecturer Music Educ and Social Justice @ Southampton Centre for Music Education and Social Justice

Professor Eva María Navarro López, Professor in Computing & AI, Former iSchool Director at Rochester Institute of Technology

Fiona Bevan, Hit Song Writer, Performing Artist and Ivor's Senator

Gabriella Di Laccio, Award-winning Soprano, Founder of Donne Women in Music

Jenn Clempner, Curriculum Lead Artist Development @ Royal Northern College of Music, PhD Researcher @ Erasmus University Rotterdam, Musician

Jennifer Fuller, Community Musician and Researcher

Joy Ellis, Pianist, Singer and Composer

Lucy Bernstein, Academic Dean of London College of Contemporary Music

Dr Metka Potočnik, Senior Lecturer in Law @ University of Wolverhampton and Director of The F-List for Music

Professor Mika Sellens, Songwriter/Producer, Professor of Electronic and Produced Music, Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Ivor's Senator

Patricia Duffy, Songwriter and UK Chapter Co-ordinator for NSAI

Professor Sam Parsley, Professor in the School of Organizations, Systems and People @ University of Portsmouth

Professor Sophie Daniels, Head of School Music Performance and Creation @ Institute Contemporary Music Performance, BBC6 Musicologist

Thais Ruiz de Alda, Founder of Digital Fems (NGO), Expert in Digital Business Development and Digital Innovation

Vick Bain, PhD Researcher @ Queen Mary University of London and Diversity in Music Consultant, Past President of the Independent Society of Musicians, Founder of The F-List for Music