

Forming a WI more details for Advisers.

This document will go through suggested steps to help generate interest in a new WI and breakdown the information an Adviser needs to go through.

It will also highlight which steps are Constitutional and ‘musts’ and which are recommendations.

Initial stages, generating interest in a new, potential WI

Interest for a new WI needs to be generated before a new WI is formed. It is advised an ‘interest’ or ‘open’ meeting is held before the formation meeting takes place.

New WI sparked by an interested group of women	New WI sparked by the federation identifying a need
The interested group of women who contacted the federation are your core group and are likely to be the Committee	The Adviser will need to identify and encourage a core group of women who are likely to be the Committee from the interest meeting
Support the core group to find a venue	The Adviser will find a venue
<p>Meet the core group and go through the Officer roles, responsibilities and explain they are the Trustees.</p> <p>It is advised you share the Trustee Eligibility Declaration form with them. It can be found on My WI or by going to My WI / Essential Information / WI Policy and Guidance / Running a WI / Trustee Eligibility form (Declaration for fit & proper persons).</p> <p>Make clear that at the formation meeting any of the members will be able to stand for nomination of the Officer roles.</p>	
Go through how the WI works and the stages of setting up.	
You can explain where information can be found e.g. My WI, who to contact at the federation, and if there is a	

<p>group/cluster/buddy system in your federation</p>	
<p>Explain how the federation supports the new WI. For example, this could be by paying for venue hire for the interest and formation meeting, and/or paying for promotional materials, and/or paying for a speaker or activity. (The federation claims back £150.00 from NFWI when the WI is formed).</p> <p>Explain the federation also supports with queries, guidance, runs federation level events and how to contact the federation when needed.</p> <p>Remember to explain that the WI will keep all its subscription in the first year and what the breakdown of finances are from second year onwards.</p>	
<p>Think about encouraging Committee members from existing WIs to talk to the potential Committee about the roles. Arrange a meeting (this can be in-person or online).</p> <p>If you think it appropriate, you can encourage the core group to visit other WIs to get a feel for the WI and make connections.</p>	
<p>Please note all the above information can be given during a meeting or over a few meetings. These can be in-person meetings, a mixture of in-person and online, or all online meetings (especially if forming a virtual WI). You may find that some core groups are happy to have a minimum of meetings and exchange most of the information by electronic means such as email.</p>	
<p>Advertise</p> <p>Be aware that legally a WI does not exist until the Constitution & Rules have been signed; so publicity should reference a 'possible new WI' or 'are you interested in a</p>	

potential WI' or similar rather than 'join Your Village WI'.
 Until a WI is formed and signed a licensing agreement with the federation, it does not have permission to use the trademarked WI logo. However, federations are permitted to use the logo for publicising a potential WI.

Hold an interest meeting

Interest meeting details

At the interest meeting:

- Consider giving a WI experience e.g. have a speaker/activity and refreshments, include an ice breaker so the interested women get a chance to mingle.
- Consider if you need any WI promo material, and/or information material. The Code of Conduct is a useful document to include.
- Have a few different issues of WI Life magazine, campaign leaflets/packs. Perhaps bring a laptop and projector and play the promo film, and/or have a look at The WI Learning Hub.
- Make clear that at the formation meeting payments will need to be taken. **Constitutionally women are not members until they have paid their subscription.**
- Give the subscription fee and how payment can be taken. For example will you accept cash, take bank transfers, or have a card reader with you. We recommend you use the federation's bank account and a card machine as most women

At the interest meeting:

- Consider giving a WI experience e.g. have a speaker/activity and refreshments, include an ice breaker so the interested women get a chance to mingle.
- Consider if you need any WI promo material, and/or information material. The Code of Conduct is a useful document to include.
- Have a few different issues of WI Life magazine, campaign leaflets/packs. Perhaps bring a laptop and projector and play the promo film, and/or have a look at The WI Learning Hub.
- Make clear that at the formation meeting payments will need to be taken. **Constitutionally women are not members until they have paid their subscription.**
- Give the subscription fee and how payment can be taken. For example will you accept cash, take bank transfers, or have a card reader with you. We recommend you use the federation's bank account and a card machine as most women

<p>don't carry cash any more. Provide details of the federation's bank account for a bank transfer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the Officer roles, remember to emphasize that these roles are fun and rewarding. Explain that there is a founding core group who contacted the federation to set up a WI. Explain that they can stand for nomination at the formation meeting, and so can anyone else. Explain that the Committee will also need more women to be on it to help run the WI. Ask those present to think about volunteering for the Committee at the formation meeting where they can stand for nominations. Let them know that they can speak to you if they want more information. • Explain that the Officers will be voted in at the formation meeting. Explain that, Constitutionally, only those women who have paid are members and are able to take part ie nominate candidates for the Officer roles, stand for election and vote. 	<p>don't carry cash any more. Provide details of the federation's bank account for a bank transfer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the Officer roles, remember to emphasize that these roles are fun and rewarding, and ask for volunteers. Consider giving a variety of ways to volunteer e.g. hands up in the meeting, coming to speak to you at the end of the meeting, sending you an email (let the women know up until when they can email you e.g. over the next two days). Remember to explain the Officer roles are Trustees and the eligibility. The Trustee Eligibility Declaration form can be found on My WI. My WI / Essential Information / WI policy and guidance / Running a WI / Trustee eligibility form (declaration for fit and proper persons). • Explain the Officers will be voted in at the formation meeting. Explain that, Constitutionally, only those women who have paid are members and are able to take part ie nominate candidates for the Officer roles, stand for election and vote.
	<p>Arrange to meet separately with your volunteers/potential Officers and other core group who may be on the Committee/in supportive roles. This meeting can be in-person or online. Follow-up information can be given in subsequent meetings or via electronic</p>

	<p>means such as email.</p> <p>When meeting with the core group, remember to explain that the WI will keep all its subscription in the first year and what the breakdown of finances are from second year onwards.</p> <p>Encourage current Committee members to talk to the potential Committee about the roles. Arrange a meeting (this can be in-person or online).</p>
<p>Please note some new WIs need more than one interest meeting. Gauge from the first interest meeting if this is needed i.e. there is enough enthusiasm and understanding to go the formation meeting.</p>	
<p>Hold a formation meeting. Formation meetings are part of the Constitution and an Adviser must attend</p>	

Formation meeting details

An Adviser must be present. This is Constitutional.

The Adviser may want to consider asking local WI Officers or Officers from another newly formed WI to come and help at the formation meeting. This can also help give contacts to the new WI for support.

Enrollment of members

Take payment, the majority of the women present should know they are expected to pay, how much, and how payment will be taken as this would have been explained in the interest meeting. However, be aware that some women may come to the formation meeting who did not attend the interest meeting and will need the subscription to be explained to them and that they have to pay in order to be members. If they do not pay at the formation meeting, they can attend the next meeting as a visitor and then decide if they want to pay. Remember to also explain that there will be a vote for the President etc. and only paid members can stand or vote.

You **must** use the NFWI member registration form. This is because this provides the data protection information to each new member. This form can be found on [My WI](#).

My WI / Running your WI / Members' resources / Membership registration form

It can be printed off, or you can bring a tablet / lap-top and email it to the women who are registering (you can also do this on your phone). They can complete it on their phones and email it back to you.

Creation of the decisions

In order for a formation to take place, the following decisions **must** be proposed by the members, agreed by a majority vote, and recorded :

- to form a new WI
- the name of the WI
- day, time and place of the monthly meeting. For virtual WIs, members will need to propose that meetings will be held online.
- number of Vice-Presidents
- number of members on the committee

These can subsequently be amended if needed at an Annual Meeting or Special Meeting as required. For example, the WI might want to alter the number of committee members as the WI grows.

The WI Adviser will write or type up a record of the formation meeting, including the decisions, the number of members present and the names of the WI Advisers present. A copy of this record **must** be kept. This can be an electronic record. See archiving on [My WI.](#)

My WI / Running your WI / Members' resources / Looking after your archives

Some WIs might find it useful to know that the WI Shop has a stationary section for WIs (<https://shop.thewi.org.uk/collections/stationery>) or your federation may provide stationary.

Election of the Committee

Go over what committee members do and remember to make it sound fun.

Make clear that all WI committee members are legal 'Trustees' of the charity and are required to sign the Trustee Eligibility Declaration form. This form can be found on [My WI](#) or by going to My WI / Essential Information / WI Policy and Guidance / Running a WI / Trustee Eligibility form (Declaration for fit & proper persons).

Explain that there must be at least six committee meetings a year (**this is Constitutional**).

Ask the members for nominations for the Committee. **This is in the Constitution.**

Confirm those nominated are willing to stand for election.
Please see the WI Handbook 2.6 Appointing a WI committee for details on Committee numbers.
If there are more volunteers than spaces, explain the procedure for the election of the committee.
Please see the WI Handbook 4.3 How to hold an Annual Meeting for details on holding a vote, including secret ballots.

Ties
Please note that in the WI Handbook it states that in the case of a tie for the last Committee place, it is recommended by NFWI that another round of voting is held between the tied candidates. Where this results in another tie, to follow the deciding procedure that has been previously decided by the WI. As this is the formation meeting there will not be a previously agreed deciding procedure.
Please refer to your federation beforehand and find out what procedure it recommends in the case of a second tie. Before the voting takes place, explain that in some cases a tie happens and how the federation recommends a decision is made on the case of a second tie. Ask the members if they are happy to adopt this deciding procedure in the case of a second tie.

Election of the President
Ask the members to nominate a person from among the new committee. **This is in the Constitution.**
Those nominated sign 'yes' or 'no' on a paper to indicate whether they are willing to stand.
If there is more than one 'yes', then there is an election. (follow the same voting procedure as above).

Election of the Officers

It is recommended this is done away from the main meeting, perhaps while the rest of the members have a refreshment break. This is because **the Constitution** states that the Secretary and Treasurer are elected by the Committee from its members (not by all the members).

As the WI **must** have a Treasurer and Secretary (along with a President), these roles **must** be elected at the formation meeting. Other appointments such as Vice Presidents, etc. can be organised at a subsequent meeting.

The Constitution states that the WI may combine the offices of Treasurer and Secretary or the offices of Treasurer and Vice President if the Federation Board of Trustees consents. No other offices may be combined.

We encourage joint roles. For example, there can be an admin team which all help

with the secretary role. This helps to share the workload. However, when there are joint roles there **must** still be one named person for each Officer role.

After the formation meeting

The Adviser updates NFWI of the newly formed WI. You **must** use the Notice of a WI formation form on [My WI](#). My WI / Federation Team / Federation roles / WI Advisers (in left-hand menu)

Once the notification has been received by the NFWI, the MCS record for the new WI will be created and you will be sent the new WI welcome pack.

The pack will include (along with some other items):

- Four copies of the WI Constitution
- The Officers and venue details form

If there is anything in the pack you would like more information about, please email membership@nfwl.org.uk

Hold another meeting of the WI, this is known as the second meeting and is when the new WI meets officially after forming and gets going. Bring the new WI welcome pack with you.

Please note the Adviser can request the new WI welcome pack is emailed to them. All the documents can be forwarded to the Officers who can sign them electronically. More information is in the WI Handbook 2.4 Signing the Constitution.

It is also worth noting that some Advisers prefer to complete the signing of the Constitution at the formation meeting as the new members are excited and 'raring to go'. Another factor is that signing the constitution as early as possible also helps the WI get a bank account set up.

At the second meeting:

The name of the WI and the federation **must** be added to the Constitution.

The Constitution **must** be signed by the President and Secretary, and **must** be witnessed by the WI Adviser and dated.

This date is the WI's official formation date. This process is then repeated four times. After all four copies of the Constitution and Rules have been signed the following **must** happen:

- One copy to be returned to the NFWI along with the Venue and Officers Details Form.
- One copy to be sent to the federation office.

- One copy to be filed in a safe place by the Secretary of the new WI with all the WI's official papers.
- One copy to be given to the bank with the WI Bank Account form. Check with your bank if they will accept Constitutions that have been signed online.

Remember the above can be done electronically. If the WI signs hard copies, it is also good practice to store an electronic scanned copy of the signed Constitution.

This completes the registration of the new WI.

Once the signed Constitution is received at NFWI, the £150.00 given to the federation to support the setting up of a new WI is paid.

Please note that WIs not registered with the Charity Commission use the signed Constitution as its proof of charitable status. Only WIs with an annual income of more than £5,000 have to be registered, and these WIs have a unique charity number. It is not permissible to use the charity number of another charity.

The first Committee meeting

Encourage the Committee to hold its first meeting as soon as possible after the second meeting.

Remember they are excited to get going and ready to create their unique WI, with their ideas and shaped by their members.

Be ready to give guidance as needed e.g. if there is a policy they need to be aware of, relevant tips to help make life easier, the federation and NFWI resources and events they can take advantage of.

Remember to remind the Committee that the WI will keep all its subscription in the first year and what the breakdown of finances are from second year onwards. Explain the Committee will need to open a bank account in the name of the WI.

Aim to do all the above with as light a touch as possible as the Committee needs to take ownership.

The WI Adviser can bring a suggested agenda for the meeting, and leave plenty of time for discussion and explanation.

The appointment of the other committee roles will need to take place if this was not

done at the formation meeting, including an MCS rep.

Take along suggestions for speakers, demonstrators, visits and so on. Encourage the Committee to ask their members for ideas and interests.

Aim to give the framework to enable them to work as a Committee and feel free to do things their own way (as long as it is Constitutional).

Explain that as a WI they will need to hold an Annual Meeting (AM). That the **Constitution** says; the first AM must be held within 15 months of the establishment of the WI and afterwards once in every calendar year; the Committee decides on the date, place and time of the Annual Meeting; and these must be agreed with the Federation Board of Trustees. Let the Committee know that the **Constitution** also says how much notice their members need to be given about the AM. Point them to the WI Handbook for more information.

Help them arrange the date, time and place of the next committee meeting.

Let them know they can come back to you with any questions

Put them in touch with Committees from nearby WIs so they can be part of a network of support. This also helps them share best practice.

The new WI is now officially formed, registered, has held its first meeting, and its first Committee meeting. It is ready to go! However, to help it get established Advisers, typically, attend the first 2 – 3 WI meetings, depending on how much support the WI needs.

Other pointers to be aware of:

- There is often a 2/3 year dip where WIs need extra support.
- It is a good idea to allocate an Independent Financial Adviser (IFE) to a new WI as soon as possible. This makes sure the WIs accounts are done correctly and checked by someone who knows the WI.

Version	Date created	Last review date	Next review date	Document author
1	April 2024	N/A	March 2025	Membership and Engagement