

# WI Adviser E-Learning Transcript - Module 4



## Slide 1 – Welcome




### WI ADVISER E-LEARNING

Module 4: Opening, Suspending, Enlarging, Reforming & Closing WIs

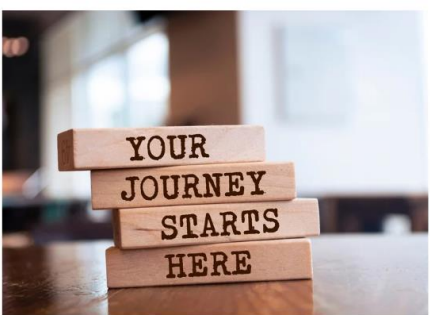
Welcome to the WI Adviser E-learning, we hope that you find the programme inspiring and that it supports you in your role as WI Adviser. This module has been designed to give you the knowledge of the constitutional requirements to open a new WI, suspend, enlarge, reform and close a WI. A transcript of this module is also available. At the end of each module, you will need to complete a short knowledge test. After you have successfully completed the test at the end of module 7 you will receive a certificate. Thank you so much for volunteering your valuable time as WI Adviser as your support is critical to WIs and federations in creating an enriching experience for our members and for the generations to come.

## Slide 2 – A WIs journey

### A WIs journey



- Opening a WI
- Suspending a WI
- Enlarging a WI
- Reforming a WI
- Closing a WI



There are several possible phases in a WIs journey that a WI Adviser may need to steer the WI committee and where it is vital that you play a formal role. This is with any opening, enlarging, suspending, reforming, and closing of a WI. We are covering all circumstances in this module so you have well rounded knowledge of each process to offer support and give them confidence to do this well, but this is also our chance to say that we hope the


majority of your time will be spent opening new WIs especially in communities where the WI does not have a presence or there are waiting lists, and this will provide you with the opportunity to capture that interest and inspire others to form a new WI. There is always room for more of us.

We hope that by the end of the session you will have a good understanding of the possible phases in a WI's journey to support you in your role. This module will take no more than 30 minutes to complete.


Let's start with how you form a new WI.

### Slide 3 – Starting a new WI

#### How to form a WI



- WI formation meeting
- Creation of decisions
- Appointing a committee
- Opening a bank account
- Enrolment of members
- Formation notification to the NFWI



It is worth noting that when we talk about starting a WI, the constitutional term used is the '*formation of a WI*', which you will see throughout this section. We have continued to use this language so that this training ties in with the constitution. This is same with later sections.

WIs come in all shapes and sizes. We have WIs that meet in person and virtually. We also have workplace WIs, prison WIs and hospice WIs and would encourage the formation of a WI anywhere that there is interest from women in joining together and becoming part of our movement.

Normally if a person wishes to set up a WI they would get in touch with their local federation. The federation will work with their WI Advisers to promote the meeting locally, organise a meeting and invite potential members. This is called the *Interest meeting* and a good way to see how keen people are to join the WI. The WI Adviser would lead this meeting and talk about the WI and its history and the diverse opportunities for its members. This is where our values, vision, and theory of change from module 1 would come in, as well as providing practical examples of how WIs operate locally. Those who wish to become members will then be invited to the *formation meeting* where you will be able to start the process with them.

There are several stages to supporting a WI to legally form but we will go through the key areas and where your role as WI Adviser can influence how well they are set up and managed. Further detail on *Forming a WI* can be found in the WI Handbook.

## Slide 4 – Formation meeting

### WI formation meeting




Photo credit: Peckham WI, by Bilal Seyhan


You will have identified a venue in advance of the formation meeting, but some ideas of suitable venues are community halls, leisure centres, cafés, church halls, libraries, or pubs but it can be any venue deemed suitable and accessible for the local community. It is important to know the community and the possible options and how accessible they are, including whether the choice of venue might be an invisible barrier to some women joining.

Alternatively, it can be an online virtual WI. Also think about timings of WI meetings and whether this generally suits the majority of those interested in joining a WI and if it feels inclusive. There are no prescribed rules for when, where and how our WIs meet. This is entirely up to the members, and at a formation meeting, this is an important first step to agree so that the new WI works for everyone.

## Slide 5 – Creation of decisions

### Creation of decisions

- Form a new WI
- Name of the WI
- Details of the monthly meeting
- Number of Vice-Presidents
- Number of members on the committee
- Month of the Annual Meeting



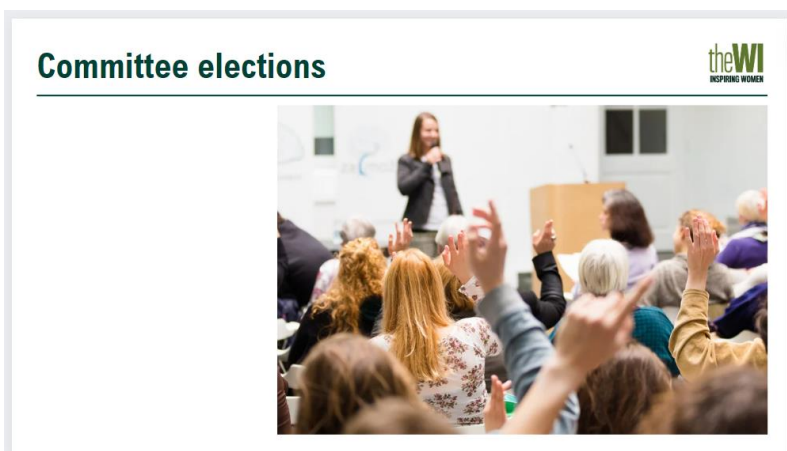
Creation of decisions is another constitutional term. In order for a formation to take place, the following decisions must be proposed by the prospective members present, agreed by a majority vote, and recorded. That is:

- to form a new WI
- the name of the WI
- the day, time, and place of the monthly meeting
- the number of Vice-Presidents
- the number of members on the committee
- the month of the Annual Meeting

As a WI Adviser, you will be responsible for producing a record of the formation meeting, including the decisions that were made to set up the WI; the number of prospective members present at the meeting, as well as your name and the names of any other WI Advisers present. A copy of this record must be kept as this forms the record of the new charity. This can be an electronic record and more information about how you keep the record can be found on My WI under the 'Running your WI' tab.

New WIs can purchase a range of WI branded stationery from the WI shop to support WI administration such as an account book, attendance register, minute book etc.

## Slide 6 – The Committee



At the formation meeting and at every subsequent Annual Meeting, the WI members will elect a minimum of three committee members including a President, Treasurer and Secretary from those who are elected to the committee. Collectively, they are known as Officers, and we covered these roles in module 3. The WI may combine the offices of Treasurer and Secretary or the offices of Treasurer and Vice-President(s) if the Federation Board of Trustees agrees to this.

The elected committee members may co-opt up to three additional committee members but there must always be a majority of elected committee members. To be eligible to sit on a committee the member must have paid their subscription for the current subscription year.

The committee has delegated authority for the overall management of the WI and must work together as a team, delegating tasks and helping each other where needed. Having a flexible and adaptable committee ensures committee members are supported and can carry out their role effectively.

The WI committee's role is to:

- Manage the affairs of the WI.
- Ensure the WI is run in accordance with the Constitution and other legal requirements.
- Ensure the WI is operating within the organisation's policy framework.
- Arrange the time and place of meetings.
- Outline the programme and present it to the WI members for approval.
- Administer funds of the WI following consultation with the WI members.
- Ensure the financial accounts of the WI are accurate and that the members are kept up to date with the financial state of the WI.
- Work continually to encourage the recruitment and introduction of new members to the WI.


The committee must meet at least six times a year, ensure decisions are made by the correct quorum, take minutes of the meetings, make rules consistent with the Constitution, and manage conflicts of interest. They must also ensure that members are actively involved in the way the WI is run, with regular communication on any changes and providing an opportunity for discussion and votes on changes where appropriate. We proactively encourage WI Committees to regularly share their ideas and plans with their members and vote or seek feedback and ideas in order to ensure the WI is constantly evolving to meet the needs of members. Once again, 'what' a WI does is not prescribed by the federation or NFWI (outside of ensuring it is operating within the charitable objects and policies) and so it is for the Committee and its membership to craft this.

## Slide 7

**Bank account**

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- Open a bank account
- Copy of the resolution to open and the signed constitution




In addition, the committee formed from the members present will need to agree a resolution to open a bank account in the name of the WI, this must also be recorded along

with the decision about who the signatories will be. A copy of the decision and a copy of the signed Constitution will need to be shown to the bank to open the account.


Once the Treasurer has been appointed and the bank account opened, the subscriptions collected at the formation meeting can be handed over to the Treasurer for banking.

## Slide 8 – MCS

### MCS



- MCS Representative




Membership of the WI is open to all women who have reached the Age of Majority (the age at which you can vote in the jurisdiction in which you live). Women may join by filling in the Membership Registration Form and paying the required subscription fee to their WI. A WI member is bound by the rules of the NFWI and of the WI for so long as she is a member. Individuals must be paid members in order to take part in the activities, democratic processes and life of their WI.


All members who enrol are entered on to the Membership Communication System (MCS). The MCS is a secure online database of members details, used at all levels of the organisation for many different functions. Every WI must have an MCS Representative to ensure data relating to their WI and its members remain up to date at all times. It is important to remind your WIs that if information is not up to date, then this will mean the WI and its members may not have access to all the benefits of membership to which they are entitled.

## Slide 9 – Formation notification to the NFWI

### Formation notification to NFWI



- Notify the NFWI
- New Welcome Pack
- 4 signed copies of the Constitution



As a WI Adviser you must notify the NFWI of the formation of a new WI and confirm this with the federation (who will of course already know the process is underway). A New WI Formation Pack full of useful information and the forms that the WIs need, will be sent to the WI's allocated WI Adviser who will bring it along to the next meeting following the formation meeting, known as the second meeting, and explain the contents. The pack will also include four copies of the Constitution, which must be signed by a newly formed WI at the second meeting.

When signing the Constitution, the name of the WI and the federation is filled in and the Constitution is then signed by the President and Secretary, which is witnessed by the WI Adviser and then dated. This date is the WI's official formation date, it will be held on record nationally and will be what is used to generate certificates and awards during the life of the WI. This process is then repeated four times. After all four copies of the Constitution and Rules have been signed:

- One copy should be returned to the NFWI along with the venue and Officers details form.
- One copy should be sent to the federation office.
- One copy should be filed in a safe place by the Secretary of the new WI with all the WI's official papers.
- One copy should be given to the bank with the WI Bank Account form.

It is also good practice to store an electronic scanned copy of the signed Constitution.

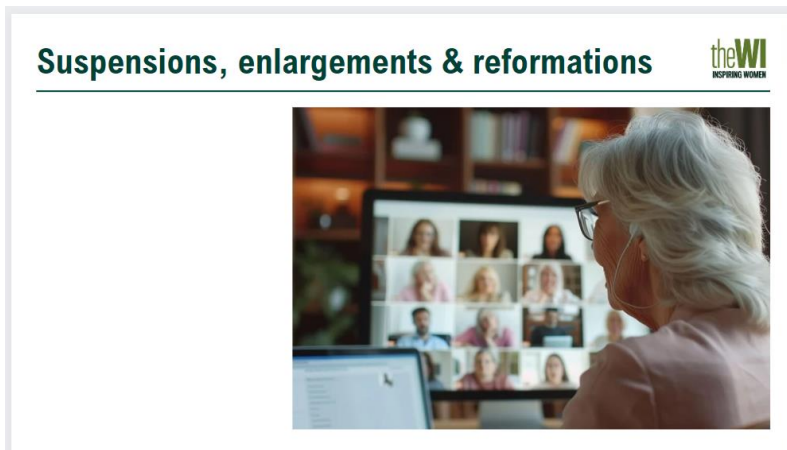
Once a new WI has formed the NFWI will make a grant of £150 to the federation to be used towards the WI's initial costs to help them get up and running. In the early days while the bank account is getting set up you may need to support the new WI with the practicalities of making bookings and purchases. The federation may pay for the first few meetings of the WI until the account is set up and the finances established.

The annual membership fee is made up of three parts and is divided between the WI, the federation and the NFWI. However, new WIs keep the whole subscription amount in their first year until the next subscriptions are due in the following subscription year. Again, this supports them to get up and running by giving them sufficient financial resources to deliver their programme.

For more information about subscriptions please see the WI Handbook.



## Slide 10 – Suspension, enlargements and reformatations



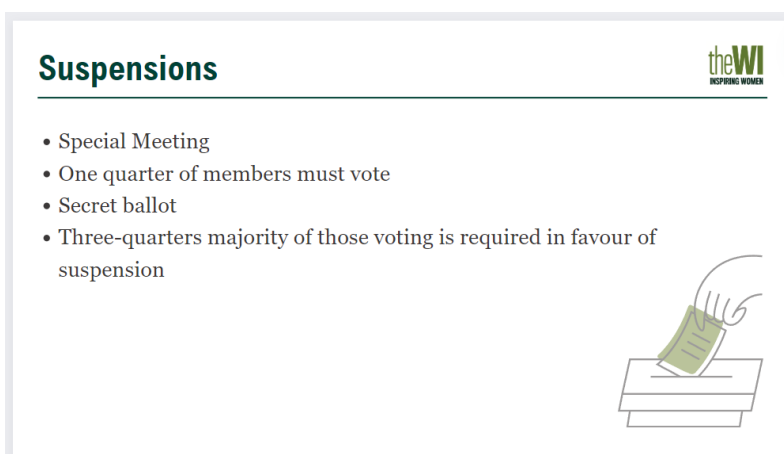
Members are permitted to vote in advance of Special Meetings called for suspension, and enlargement by post, email, or hand delivery. WI suspensions, enlargements, and reformatations should be conducted by a WI Adviser as it is your role to support the WI(s) in question to follow the appropriate legal and constitutional process.

It is worth noting what each means.

*A suspension is when a WI decides not to continue. However, there is a possibility that the WI could reform within three years. If this does not occur it is deemed to have closed. An enlargement means one WI joins another to establish a new enlarged WI, and this may be an alternative to suspension. Reformation is a WI that has been suspended and reopened within three years.*


We will only go through the key highlights today but don't worry there is more about these in the WI Handbook.

## Slide 11 - Suspensions



**Suspensions**

- Special Meeting
- One quarter of members must vote
- Secret ballot
- Three-quarters majority of those voting is required in favour of suspension



Next we have Suspensions, but before we go into the process, it is important to say that in your role as WI Adviser, it is vital that you try and help the WI avoid such action, and



depending on the reason for possible suspension, encourage members to stand for the committee and the opportunities this brings for personal growth, or to signpost to resources to promote the WI more in the community or revisit the WI programme if members are losing interest. WIs will all go through life cycles which are dictated by their location and surroundings, the local population, other community activities etc and so it is not unusual for a WI to experience times when their sustainability is in question.

As a WI Adviser a large part of your role will be to manage and maintain morale, provide practical support and suggestions, and help them through this period of instability if you can. However, some WIs you support will naturally come to their end in your time as a WI Adviser and so in these circumstances it is your role to support them to come to an end in a way that feels right for the remaining members and the community, and which is completed in line with the legal and constitutional requirements for 'closing' a charity. The WI calls this process 'suspension' rather than closure due to the rules around holding the funds of the charity for a prescribed time in case there is a resurgence of interest locally in 'reforming'. We will explain this more later in this module.

### The suspension process

The suspension of a WI must be conducted by a WI Adviser and Federation Board of Trustees informed of the intention to suspend.

A Special Meeting must be called by the WI when a resolution is put forward to suspend.


At least one quarter of the WI members must vote on the resolution, either at the meeting or in advance in accordance with the Constitution.

A secret ballot must be held.

The resolution to suspend must be approved by a three-quarters majority of the WI members voting. If a three-quarters majority is not achieved, then the WI will continue, and a committee and officers must be elected.

## **Slide 12 – Once the resolution to suspend a WI has been passed**

### **Suspensions**



**What happens once the resolution to suspend a WI has been passed?**

- Pay all outstanding bills
- Financial records are 'independently' examined and accounts closed, and the balance of the fund is forwarded to the federation
- Disposal of any WI property
- The suspension will last for three years

The treasurer should pay all the outstanding bills and the balance of the funds is forwarded to the federation. The bank account should be closed. It is important to remind remaining members that any outstanding funds are charity money (not members' money) and therefore the funds remaining must be passed to the federation and not shared amongst members or spent on anything that does not fit with the charitable objects.

Arrangements for the disposal of any WI property should be made in line with the constitution and charitable objects and in consultation with the WI Adviser and federation.


The WIs record must be passed to the Federation Board of Trustees for safekeeping along with an independently examined copy of the accounts.

As noted above, this is a suspension, not formal closure. The *suspension* will last for three years from the date it was agreed, after which time it is officially closed, unless in the interim a new WI has been formed serving that area and then the WI will officially be re-opened and access given to any remaining funds. This is an important part of ensuring the WI remains at the heart of communities and so it is worth explaining this to any remaining members of the WI so that they understand the ongoing commitment to re-establishing the WI in their community if there is interest in doing so in the future.

- The NFWI should be informed of the suspension by the WI Adviser.
- Members should be actively encouraged to consider joining other local WIs or becoming supporters so that they can remain part of the WI movement.
- The WI will need to update their Charity Commission record if registered.

## Slide 13 – Enlargements

### Enlargements



- WI Adviser will manage the transition
- One WI is *terminating* and one is *continuing*
- Special meeting at both WIs to vote on the resolution to enlarge
- Secret ballot
- Quarter of WI members must vote
- Three-quarters majority of those voting is required in favour of the enlargement in both WIs

Consent should be obtained from the Federation Board of Trustees in advance of formalising this process. In non-WI terms this would be considered a 'merger' of two charities.

As WI Adviser you would manage the process and transition as well as liaise with both WIs and the federation to make sure all parties are content and that the right process and paperwork has been completed.

It is crucial that the WIs in question understand that this process means that one of the WIs is classed as the 'terminating' WI and the other as the 'continuing' WI. For the terminating WI this will be the formal closure of their charity and they will no longer exist as a separate entity. Deciding which of the WIs is the terminating WI may well be obvious (e.g. if one is facing closure and one is thriving) but this needs to be clarified to avoid difficulties further down the line.

In terms of process, each WI calls a Special Meeting and puts forward a resolution to enlarge. There is example wording for the Resolution in the WI Handbook.

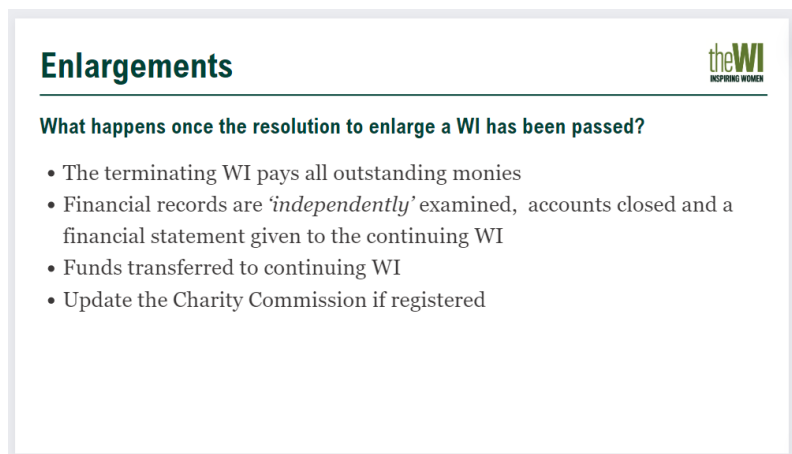
All WI members should be notified of the proposed enlargement 10 days before the Special Meeting.

At the Special Meetings of both WIs, a secret ballot is held to approve the resolution and terms of the enlargement.

At least one quarter of the WI members should vote on the resolution to enlarge, either at the meeting or in advance in accordance with the Constitution.

A three-quarters majority of those voting is required in favour of the enlargement in both WIs.

## Slide 14 – Once the resolution has been passed



The slide is titled "Enlargements" and features the "theWI" logo in the top right corner. The logo consists of the text "theWI" in a bold, sans-serif font, with "INSPIRING WOMEN" in a smaller font below it. The main content of the slide is a bulleted list of actions to be taken after a resolution to enlarge a WI has been passed.

**Enlargements**

**What happens once the resolution to enlarge a WI has been passed?**

- The terminating WI pays all outstanding monies
- Financial records are '*independently*' examined, accounts closed and a financial statement given to the continuing WI
- Funds transferred to continuing WI
- Update the Charity Commission if registered

Once the resolution is passed, the terminating WI must pay all outstanding monies, have the books independently examined and the account closed.


A copy of the independently examined financial statement should be given to the continuing WI with all the remaining property and records.

Funds from the terminating WI will be transferred to the continuing WI. If the terminating WI is registered with the Charity Commission, its record will need to be updated and closed.


The NFWI should be notified of the enlargement as soon as possible.

## Slide 15 – Reformatations

### Reformatations



- A WI can reform within three years of suspension
- Does not have to have the same members, venue or name but **MUST** serve the same community
- Any funds held by the federation are passed to the reformed WI



A WI can be re-formed within three years of suspension.

It does not need to involve the same members, use the same venue, or retain the original name. It is simply up to the federation to decide if it serves the same area as the former WI.

Any funds of the suspended WI being held by the federation should (excluding interest) be passed to the re-formed WI.


The procedure for re-forming a WI is the same as starting a WI, although the re-formed WI does not get to retain the full membership subscription for the first year. Instead, however it can access the remaining funds from the previous WI in that area.

Please note that the formation grant from the NFWI is only for new WIs and not re-formatations.


When you receive initial interest for a new WI it is always worth checking with the federation that there was not a previous WI in the area in the last 3 years as often the held monies are a great start for a new WI, as is the use of the history of the WI in the local community to generate renewed interest.

## Slide 16 – Closures

### Closures



Federation Secretaries will be notified by the NFWI when suspended WIs pass the three-year mark and are officially marked as 'closed' on the MCS



The majority of the process for a closure will have already taken place as part of the suspension process.


Federation Secretaries will be notified by the NFWI when suspended WIs pass the three-year mark and are officially marked as 'closed' on the MCS. When you get to closing a WI, the hard work has already been done in the suspension process.

WI Advisers should inform their federation and the NFWI of enlargements, suspensions, re-formations, and closures via the dedicated forms on the WI Adviser page on My WI.


It is recommended that you undertake further reading from the WI Handbook and contact the membership team should you have any questions. In all likelihood you may only rarely (or perhaps never) come across some of these processes and so we understand that the first time you do it can be daunting. You should always feel able to contact NFWI at any time with any queries as they will be happy to talk you through the process and make sure you have everything you need.

## Slide 17 – Summary of Learning

### Summary of Learning



- Opening a WI
- Suspending a WI
- Enlarging a WI
- Reforming a WI
- Closing a WI





As a WI Advisers you will take the lead in guiding and supporting WIs through different types of organisational change that have fundamental impacts on its existence. These are constitutional processes that require careful consideration, so we hope this session has helped you understand these a little better.

## Slide 18 – What does it mean for me as a WI Adviser?

### What does it mean for me as a WI Adviser?

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- Constitutional
- Pastoral care




As a WI Adviser, it is important for you to get a really good sense of the constitutional requirements for each type of meeting, which will ensure each one is delivered well. You will oversee these processes and support the committee to comply with requirements to deliver the expected outcomes and sustain good governance, whichever situation they are in, and this will safeguard the WI, its reputation and reduce risk.

As well as being responsible for the legal and administrative side of these processes, your role is also as a critical friend and supporter. Many of these processes have an emotional element to them as well, particularly the enlargement and suspension processes and so it is part of your role to ensure everyone involved feels supported and can call on you as they need to. You will help pastorally, depending on the situation, which could be to inspire new committee members to join a committee, or bring confidence to a difficult situation that is also likely to be emotional, especially with suspending or closing a WI, and at the same time, looking at options to avoid the WI having to take drastic action. Your role is a vital one and we know first-hand from members just how important it is to them to have a WI Adviser by their side.

## Slide 19 – Knowledge Test

### Knowledge Test

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Well done, you have reached the end of this module. We have prepared five questions as part of the knowledge test which we hope you have answered accurately. If not, the please do return to the slides and become familiar with the topics.