

NFWI meeting guidance: in line with the roadmap out of lockdown

Please note: this information has been taken from My WI and the link is:

<https://mywi.thewi.org.uk/running-your-wi/guide-to-running-meetings/resumption-of-wi-meetings>

The following guidance is applicable from Monday 19 July.

We realise that each WI is an independent charity operating within our national federated structure. As such each WI can, by a committee decision and member vote, decide on its own interpretation of the Government guidelines; however the suite of documents prepared by NFWI provides you with the national position and guidance to support your decision making. This is NFWI's position based on our interpretation of the Government guidance and it is our **strong recommendation** to use this to support your planning. Please do bear in mind that if you do **choose to take a different position then you must document this clearly with minutes of any meetings** where this was discussed along with details of the actions being taken to mitigate any identified risks.

Please note this guidance is in line with the lifting of the majority of legal social restrictions in England from 19 July. Please be mindful that Covid-19 is still with us and the potential for spikes in cases with subsequent impositions of greater social restrictions for specific areas or the whole country continues to exist.

It is the responsibility of each federation and WI to keep up-to-date with [local restrictions](#) if planning meetings. **Stricter local rules or a total lockdown will always supersede NFWI guidance.**

NB Where “you” or “your” is used in this document to make it easier to read it refers to all WI members.

Where “we” is used it refers to NFWI.

Thank you to all federations and WIs for how much effort has been made to adapt the membership experience to online and offline activities such as [virtual meetings](#) and speakers, and providing activities through [meetings in a bag](#). We would like to ask WIs to continue to consider providing an element of online activities for those members who have found a benefit from virtual activity during the Covid crisis and who would continue to appreciate the greater accessibility this gives them.

From 19 July

England is now on step four of the roadmap out of lockdown. This means there is an end to most legal social restrictions and WIs can meet in-person in full numbers.

This is very good news and we hope that all our members can enjoy coming together again. We thank you for your patience, resilience and inventiveness over the last 16 months. You are all truly inspiring and a testament to the spirit of the WI.

There are some precautions that need to be taken into account and some safety measure which still need to be in place which the Government outlines on [gov.uk](#) and which this guidance will go through.

Changes from 19 July:

- No limit to the numbers of people who can meet either indoors or outdoors.
- No requirement to social distance.

- Face coverings are no longer mandatory but are advised for crowded spaces.

2.1 Precautions and safety measures that must be in place:

- While any number of people can meet indoors for meetings and activities it is still safer to meet outdoors if practical. When meeting indoors please make sure your meeting space is ventilated. This can be as simple as opening windows. Partially opened is fine as long as fresh air can circulate around the room.
- Please make sure members are continuing to clean their hands regularly. This can be hand sanitising or hand washing. Please make sure there are facilities for members to wash their hands in indoor venues. Please remind members to bring their own hand sanitiser as well as providing a hand sanitiser for all. This is for both indoor and outdoor meetings but especially important for any outdoor events.
- Make it very clear that any members or visitors who have any [Covid-19 symptoms](#) **must** stay at home. Please be aware that this may increase the possibility of speakers or demonstrators having to cancel at short notice and factor this into your meeting plans. Please see below for more information on Covid-19 symptoms.
- If you have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace you **must** do so.
- Make sure frequently touched surfaces and/or surface that are likely to be touched by many people are regularly cleaned.
- Continue to carry out risk assessments as working to ensure an event is as safe as possible is a legal requirement. It is also recommended that records are kept of any safety planning in case decisions are questioned in the future. Risk assessments are best practice as they help with both planning and record keeping. Please see below for more information on risk assessments.
- If you experience any Covid-19 symptoms you must get a [PCR test](#). If you test positive and have attended an in-person WI meeting or activity within the last seven days you must inform the Secretary or President.

2.2 Best practice:

- [NHS Test and Trace](#) is no longer a legal requirement but it is recommended best practice. Please continue to keep a register of members and visitors at meetings and events. Please see below for more details.
- While it is no longer mandatory to wear face coverings / masks indoors the Government has stated that face coverings still provide protection and help reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission. Those members who still wish to wear face coverings indoors or outdoors should not be questioned about their decision.
- Please be aware that face coverings make communication more difficult in general and this impacts people with hearing needs. There is more information available from the [National Deaf Children's Society](#) and here are five tips for communicating with people who lip read from [Deaf Unity](#).
- It is recommended that members carry out a [rapid lateral flow test](#) before attending a meeting to ensure they are not unknowingly infected with Covid. (It is still possible to catch Covid-19 even if you have been vaccinated).

3 Risk assessments further information

If you are simply meeting as a group of friends, even if the entire group are WI members, then you do **not** need to carry out a risk assessment.

You can find a blank risk assessment in Appendix A and a completed example in Appendix B* .

Please make sure you complete any identified actions for safe meetings. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) information on risk assessments is available [here](#). Please remember that as well as continuing to think about Covid related risks all potential risks should be assessed such as trip hazards. Copies of the risk assessments must be sent to the committee for final authorisation and filing.

4 Vaccines

Very important: The vaccine programme has started and many members will now have received vaccinations. Please remember that, at the same time, some members will not have received the vaccine. Some may not have been invited for one yet, some may not be able to have a vaccine on medical grounds and others may not be comfortable having a vaccine.

The Government has introduced a '[NHS Covid Pass](#)' which proves you have been double vaccinated. These are currently for international travel only. The Government has asked that organisers of 'large scale events' such as music festivals and 'higher risk settings' such as nightclubs ask attendees to show a NHS Covid Pass. However, it is not compulsory for attendees to show a pass when asked. There are no current plans for Covid passes to be used for smaller scale events. For these reasons WI members and visitors should not be asked if they have been vaccinated in order to gain entry to an in-person WI meeting or activity.

The Government has stated that it reserves the right to review Covid passes and whether showing them will be compulsory in the future. We will continue to monitor this and take any changes into consideration in our guidelines for members.

Please remember that safety measures such as ventilating your venue and washing hands must still be in place and these have been designed by the Government to reduce the risk of transmission as much as possible regardless of whether a group has had vaccines or not. Please remind your members of this for reassurance.

For more information on the NHS Covid Pass including how to get one see [here](#).

5 More information on NHS Test and Trace (England)

Keep a record of everyone who attends a meeting. This is in case you need to provide details for a [NHS Test and Trace procedure](#)

- Make sure it is dated.
- Have a page for visitors and speakers (if applicable) where they add their contact details. People do not have to leave their contact details if they object but make sure you note this on your records.
- Keep this document safe according to GDPR rules e.g. keep in a locked drawer or password protected if electronic.
- Make sure all attendees understand it will be used for NHS Test and Trace / Wales Test Trace Protect if necessary.
- Make sure it is kept for 21 days.
- Never attend meetings or visit a vulnerable member if you have been advised to isolate by NHS Test and Trace / Wales Test Trace Protect because you have been in contact with a case of Covid-19, even if you feel fine.

For more information about the administration of NHS Test and Trace, including what to expect e.g. what number this service calls you from, please click [here](#).

For more information about Wales Test Trace Protect, please click [here](#).

6 More information about Covid-19 symptoms

- Make it clear members, visitors and speakers **must stay at home if they have any of the Covid-19 symptoms** – list what these are and send out a reminder, ideally on the day of the meeting, so that members are fully aware of their responsibility.

- Make it clear members, visitors and speakers must stay at home if they are self-isolating due to symptoms in their household.
- Make it clear all attendees, including visitors and speakers, must inform the WI if they develop Covid-19 symptoms within seven days of attending a meeting.

If you are informed of an attendee becoming unwell you must contact all attendees and let them know. They will need to check the government's information on [NHS Test and Trace](#) / or call 111 in England and Never attend meetings if you have been advised to isolate by NHS Test and Trace because you have been in contact with a case of Covid-19.

- If you need a test but are having problems with the internet or you do not have the internet call 119.

7 Including all members

Remember to consider members who may not feel comfortable meeting in person yet. Please continue to keep them involved in the various ways WIs have been supporting their members such as by providing meetings in a bag, phone calls, pen-pal schemes, and actions they can do from home to support local causes such as baking for a foodbank etc.

Do also consider whether you need to keep an element of virtual meetings and activities going forward. This will help keep your WI accessible and open. It will support members who cannot attend physical meetings or who joined during the pandemic because you ran virtual activities. More information is available on [My WI](#).

8 Annual Meetings

Following a member-wide consultation the Constitution has been formally updated to allow for hybrid Annual Meetings. An updated Constitution is available on [My WI](#).

In the meantime, should you have any questions about holding your Annual Meeting, please contact your federation in the first instance. You can also contact the Membership Team membership@nfwf.org.uk

We wish all our members well and thank you once again for all your efforts to keep your WIs active. Please enjoy getting back together again and feeling confident to open up your WIs. Adapting to this new world and learning to 'live with the virus' has been and will continue to be invaluable for the future of the WI and without our members there is no WI.

The following Appendices are also available:

- [Appendix A: risk assessment template.](#)
- [Appendix B: risk assessment example.](#)
- [Appendix C: if a member becomes unwell at a meeting](#)
- [Appendix D: handling money](#)
- [Appendix E: WIs and federations that own their own halls](#)

*Please note this is meant as a starting point to help highlight the kinds of risks you may need to think about. Each WI must assess its own risks, some of which will be unique to them.

Risk assessments are available on BFWI website and the link is <https://www.bucksfwi.org.uk/covid-advice.html>