

The WI Guide

Who we are and
what we stand for

the**WI**
INSPIRING WOMEN



Each WI is a charity, governed by the Constitution and Rules for WIs and every WI officer is therefore a charity trustee. This means there are some legal requirements, but guidance and support is always available from your federation and the NFWI so that your WI can thrive within this framework.

The WI Guide has been created to showcase the broad nature of the WI, providing both information and inspiration around the vision, values and purpose of the organisation.

Designed to be editorial in style, The WI Guide brings the strengths and diversity of the WI to life through the eyes of five members.

It features an introduction to the WI brand, advice on how to have a successful WI and includes links to useful resources on the WI Moodle and NFWI website.

Who we are. The National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) is the largest voluntary organisation for women in the UK, with over 210,000 members in more than 6,500 WIs.



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The WI is here for you

In 1915 we set out to give women a voice, to be a force for good in the community. A trusted place for women, run by women of all generations — an opportunity to share experiences or learn from someone with real experience, first hand.

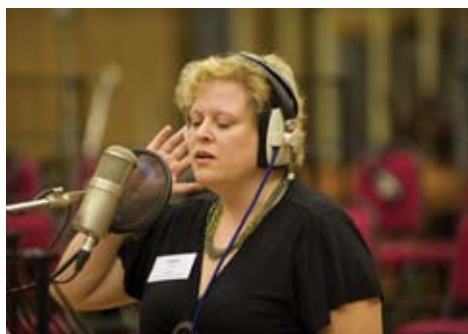
The same is true today.

The WI has moved with the times and the many ways women's lives have changed but it still focuses on what really matters. Helping women to lead the lives they want to, with all the advice they can get, and having a say in all our futures.

For many of us the WI is an opportunity to share knowledge with other women, coming together socially and to learn new skills. A place where you will be listened to and a place where you will be heard. There will always be jam-making, but you'll also find belly dancing, creative writing, budgeting and more.

Some of us join to campaign: if that's what inspires you the WI has a voice in the issues of today, from climate change to children's diet and human trafficking to supermarket expansion. And it's a voice people really listen to.

For everyone who joins the WI there's the freedom to make what you want of it. It might be the most important lifeline in your community or it may be something to dip in and out of while juggling everything else in your life. A refuge from needing to do lots of things to choosing what you really want to do.





“Women are poor at making time for themselves”

Emma James

Pembrokeshire College WI, Wales

Most importantly Emma sees the WI as somewhere that she can get away guilt-free from family commitments. She says her full-time working life means she feels guilty taking time off to do anything and as a mother it is also hard to justify taking time out for herself. But the WI legitimises time off when she can just be herself. ‘It wouldn’t be the same if I was just going out with friends. It’s a chance to spend time with like-minded ladies who all enjoy their walks or trips to the theatre.’ Her point will ring true with many other women ‘it wouldn’t be the same if I was just going out with friends.’ Because it is the WI and people understand it is not just a social event, she doesn’t feel the need to ask anyone’s permission. In conclusion she says ‘It’s a life-line for me.’ She’s not the only full-time working mother in the group and she says there are several single working members too, who seem to be drawn to the social aspect of their meetings. Certainly their WI is somewhere they can all be themselves as women without needing to justify their decision, and all ages are embraced from 24 upwards.

A sign of the times, Emma’s WI noticed the reduction in funding available for local charities and have stepped in to support their local women’s refuge, with members

providing toiletries, or Easter eggs for the children when they arrive with nothing. In other respects too they are keeping things modern, ‘We like to get the business out of the way quickly at the start of a meeting’ so they can get onto what they all enjoy doing.

Foremost in their minds is the need to keep their WI fresh and be relevant so as to maintain everyone’s attention. That way they can focus on what they enjoy which, as she puts it, is ‘physically meeting and sharing ideas.’ She admits that at first she had reservations about the WI, about whether she’d fit in but on her first outing with them, ‘the fun and enthusiasm banished all doubts I’d had.’

Emma has observed how women are poor at making time for themselves but that the WI is somewhere they can make time without the usual guilt. And there they can learn so much, ‘we run all sorts of courses from a confidence course to a cocktail-making demonstration.’ The latter was emphatically not a cheese and wine evening. But she’s keen to point out, ‘we all hanker after learning basic skills like cooking, so it helped when one of our members who was a good cook showed us some easy recipes.’





“It’s a chance to be a part of something”

Lindsay Garfitt **Seven Hills WI,** **Sheffield**

The 26-year-old founder member of Seven Hills WI in Sheffield recruited members using the very 21st century tool of Facebook. ‘We soon realised there was more interest than we’d expected,’ said Lindsay Garfitt, and the room above a pub where they’d arranged to meet suddenly had people perched all around it, as its capacity of 40 was surpassed. ‘There were students, grandmothers; it was great because we wanted it to be accessible to everyone.’

It all started when Lindsay was working as a journalist and was invited to accompany a coach load of WI members to 10 Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament. ‘It wasn’t what I’d expected at all.’ In her own words she’d thought they’d be ‘boring and just talk about jam making and knitting.’ But she was surprised. The wide ranging age group talked to her about their friendships and how they had basically grown up together. They also said their WI was where they meet new people. She was inspired. ‘I’d heard about the Shoreditch Sisters (a London WI with lots of young members) and I realised that Sheffield is an eclectic city and thought it could work. And it did.’

They keep it something that interests a broad range of women by offering a good mix of topics. ‘We do make jam but we also do cocktail making, burlesque dancing and fascinator making.’ One of the most popular evenings was when they were taught to sing *Jerusalem* properly.

Lindsay was inspired by a dissatisfaction with the opportunities in her own life. ‘I realised that when you work full time, your life revolves around work, and socialising is about going out for a drink, or maybe a trip to the cinema with friends. My friends and I did want to do more creative things and learn something, but we didn’t always have the time for the commitment to do a course. With the WI, as it is only monthly, we can afford the time.’

Lindsay is no revolutionary though. ‘I like reading the minutes, it makes it more of an organisation than just a group of women meeting.’ What matters is all the new people who come, ‘it broadens horizons, making so many new friends and makes us realise quite how much of a difference the WI has made to our lives. It’s a chance to be a part of something.’

‘When members have problems we all step in to help, like when one woman was getting divorced and had to move into an unfurnished house, we all helped. Another woman had moved to Sheffield for work and was homesick until she came to the WI.’ Interestingly for quite a young WI — ages range from 24 to 59, there is a nostalgia for the ‘make do and mend’ attitude of the war years, that they feel has been lost. ‘We need to learn to help strangers again.’ So one of the things they’ve been doing is fundraising for a nearby shelter for abused women. Starting their own WI has been a success ‘When we started I did wonder if people would come on their own, and they do.’

“They’re my extended family”

Rhoda Lee
Alphington WI,
Devon

A long-term rural member in her nineties, Rhoda Lee is an active member who has witnessed the WI transform itself for the twenty-first century. ‘I think in my lifetime women have become more powerful and if they want something done, they’re prepared to work for it.’ Her relationship with her WI (which is ten miles away in Exeter) is very close. ‘They’re my extended family,’ and the idea that other members may be mere acquaintances is not her experience. Members step in and help each other through bouts of ill-health, including one member who has Alzheimers who needs a lot of support, as well as seeing each other at meetings.

But nor is it just a support-system as during her life-time Rhoda’s WI campaigned for the then new mother, Queen Elizabeth to reduce her public duties so that she could devote more time to her baby. Her WI has also campaigned for issues that we take for granted in everyday life, like ensuring the salt content of food is monitored and that milk prices should be controlled. Issues we are used to assuming are in the hands of government often come to light, thanks to the efforts of WI members. ‘We are a respected force’ she comments and never sees herself as purely on the receiving end. ‘It is important to keep in mind what we can bring to share with others.’

Rhoda rightfully points out that many women in retirement do a lot for their local community, explaining how her WI have raised money for trees to be planted around the local school. A recent talk by a nurse from the nearby high dependency unit opened their eyes to many addiction issues. They clearly explore areas beyond their comfort zones. But before this starts to sound like hard work she qualifies it by saying, ‘ours is a very laid back WI, and we are good at giving members what they want,’ which is clearly a bit of a challenge.

Rhoda is emphatic in saying her WI is not just a social club either. What appeals to her is that by campaigning ‘we can achieve something’ and that ‘we have an awful lot to offer.’ On one occasion she criticised the local newspaper for not covering the WI’s activities and they were given the front page for six weeks, which may not have been what they were expecting, but it was ‘a huge success’. They arranged a rota and everyone had a go at writing the stories. She also recalls times when women would bring babies, dogs and toddlers to meetings and they’d all take turns in looking after them, so that everyone could take part. Most of all she says an activity brings them together — anything from a panto to jam making — ‘we aim not to be stuffy, ever.’





“We do things with a twist, and we never take the easy route”

Karen Rawlings **Little Bowden WI,** **Leicestershire & Rutland**

As Karen Rawlings puts it, ‘I have the WI in my blood.’ She is in the exceptional position of having a mother who was a WI president and an aunt who was on the federation committee. So when she moved house into a new street, there were a lot of jokes about going to the local WI but there wasn’t one nearby that suited her, so she helped found her own with ages ranging from 26 to 70.

‘We all find time to go to the WI, I think because we haven’t innovated what the WI is, but we do things with a twist, and we never take the easy route.’ It took six months of planning for four of them, brainstorming ideas of things they wanted to do and, two years in, she says they haven’t nearly got through the list yet. ‘We didn’t realise how much time it would take but we’re grateful because we’ve learned new skills and we try things as a group we wouldn’t normally.’

One big innovation they have at their WI is that they have a bar. ‘It is very important, and people look forward to it. It’s Me-Time, a drink with friends. It is informal, although we also have structure.’

Every WI is different and this is what works here. To be sure they were right they did a questionnaire that helped get everyone’s input. They’ve made a point of never talking ‘at’ their members, and they only have an informal update before the speaker begins at any session and put everything else down in a newsletter. As Karen puts it, ‘we try to take the best bits.’ Given their rural location, they’re aware that many members can only commit to coming to meetings, and that working women can only dip in and out, but they’re happy with offering the opportunity ‘to just be a woman, not a granny, a mother, or someone whose job defines them.’ But even though they realise time commitments vary they say, ‘there are so many things we want to do, like campaigning.’ They are keen to join in more with the larger WI as a whole and put forward some of their own resolutions.

The dominant message is very positive, with Karen commenting that their WI is ‘a lifeline’, a commonly made remark, but also ‘why should we wait until we’re retired to have this much fun.’ And her parting comment says it all, ‘membership is a bargain!’

“Clapham WI is a team effort”

Jheni Arboine **Clapham WI,** **London**

Jheni started the Clapham WI by accident really. She was at a meeting of her local school PTA and they had a joke about forming a WI, because they'd heard about the waiting lists for the nearby South London WIs in Wimbledon and Dulwich. But a seed was sown and before long she did indeed found a WI. 'Each WI is different,' she comments. In her opinion what's distinctive about Clapham WI is that it is a team effort, 'I get lots of feedback from other members who are always encouraging me to delegate the jobs.' At the moment they have projects on the go, and development plans which other members are looking after. 'What I've learned to do is say "yes, you can do this for me," so everyone gets involved.'

So far they're very proud that they've never paid for a speaker, using their funds instead to pay for their meeting room. The focus is always on giving value to members, 'we have an eclectic character as a WI, with a huge age range from 20 to 70, and all kinds of backgrounds from single people to widows, self-employed to unemployed.' The key to recruiting new members has been an organic process. Sometimes they've publicised meetings by putting up posters, but their most successful event was when they did a 'WI Swap' with one of the oldest WIs in the country, which was Louth in Lincolnshire. They learned a lot, particularly the need to give everyone a chance to talk

and join in. One meeting that was an insight for them all, was the time they asked members to bring in something they had made. Some brought their children, and everyone had a chance to talk. They certainly got to know each other better.

Clapham WI uses Facebook and Twitter (thanks to a member who works in PR), and they really like embracing the twenty-first century. The key to their success is simpler though; the need to be warm and welcoming, for people to be able to establish new friendships, and most of all having the opportunity to see things from a different perspective and interact with people from every walk of life.

And what does Jheni notice most as a benefit of being in the WI? 'The women look great. When I see one of the 70-year-olds walking to a meeting, and take a look around the room, I see women who have nothing stopping them, who get on with life.' What impresses her most is that the WI offers the chance for women to be who they are and see each other as individuals. 'It starts to validate women, and they get a lot from it. It's important, particularly in a city, which shows that the WI is not just a rural, middle class meet-up for white women who lunch.' Clapham WI is clearly a very happy accident.



Lifelong inspiration

Elaine Foote

Little Bowden WI, Leicestershire & Rutland



'Join the WI for the ability to challenge yourself and really discover what makes you the person you are — a totally empowering experience.'

Samantha Ireland

Curdworth WI, Warwickshire

'I joined in 1979 when I was 14 years old, and went along with my mum. We are still going together today. At whatever age we are there is something for everyone, friendships to have, lots of fun and laughter (plenty of that!), but I think on a serious point our resolutions are very important as it gives us a real voice.'

Maggie Simons

Bishopstone with Hinton Parva WI, Wiltshire

"Since moving to Wiltshire I have attended Denman for goldwork, basket making and silk scarves via our Lottery Grant, as well as taking a further public speaking course"

Denize Belingy

Clapham WI, London

'It's the gift that keeps on giving!'

Sandon WI

Staffordshire

'We are a very social group of ladies and enjoy trips out to the cinema, theatre, meals at the local college, museums and art galleries.'

Grainne Purkiss

Little Bowden WI, Leicestershire & Rutland



'I learnt how to be part of the community and make a difference.'

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Adrienne Chandler
The W.I.G.s WI, Essex



'The opportunity to meet new friends, learn new things and be part of an iconic organisation like the WI is just too good to miss.'

Margaret Penfold
Ellendune WI, Wiltshire

'I have gained confidence and improved public speaking skills as a result of three years as President.'

Georgiana Mannion
Buns & Roses WI, West Yorkshire



'For younger people like myself who are based in cities and work full time and seem to have all the stresses in the world, I would encourage to join for a sense of community'

Rachel Black
Seven Hills WI, Sheffield

'I wanted to have an evening that was just mine and didn't involve just going to the pub.'

Angela Joyce Hibberd
Hutton Lowcross WI, Teesside

'My top three reasons why someone should consider joining the WI are: fellowship — friendship of like minded ladies, who help when in need, belonging — to an organisation that has the power to lobby the government on issues of interest to me, fun — we are a happy bunch of ladies, and there is lots of laughter and tears. We enjoy being and doing things together.'

Gillian Jones
Chartham WI, East Kent

'I have organised various events for my WI: a hop picking supper; BBQ; French, Italian and Hungarian evenings as well as trips to the V&A Museum, Brighton Pavillion and Royal Windsor. Our WI was awarded a grant by Awards for All which enables 17 members to attend courses at Denman College, plus run nine craft mornings in our WI — we are considering applying again!'

Inspire and inform

This section of The WI Guide is intended to provide an introduction to the WI brand: the elements that help us to communicate to current members, new members and the wider public in a clear, distinct and consistent manner.

The WI brand elements have been designed to help us communicate with a balance of information and inspiration.

1. Our brand

Inspiring Women is the idea at the heart of our brand. It is drawn from the WI's role as an organisation that gives greater meaning to women's lives as well as reflecting the diversity and relevance of the WI in the world today.

2. Key messages

To help us be more consistent in how we talk about the WI we have pulled together three key messages which enhance Inspiring Women and express some of the key strengths of the WI in shorthand.

3. Visual presentation

Our visual presentation has been created to give the WI a strong modern look.





How we talk about ourselves

As a naturally diverse organisation it can be a challenge to present a consistent picture of the WI. To give us a shared sense of the WI's defining characteristics three key messages have been formulated as a springboard to help us explain to others the vision and values of the WI.



The WI is here to inspire you

The WI is all about inspiring women. It's a rich source of experiences, knowledge and skills passed down through generations and updated every day.

The WI is everything you want it to be

The WI is naturally diverse. It offers all kinds of opportunities to all kinds of women. For some women, an opportunity to catch up with friends; for others it's a route to learning new skills, and for some the campaigning aspect of the organisation may be the key motivator.



The WI is what you make of it

The WI comes in all shapes and sizes. We offer women the opportunity to join and be involved in the way that suits them. Usually this means joining a local WI, though some may prefer to set up a new WI with other like-minded women, and others may even prefer to be Associates of the NFWI with no local WI involvement.



Presenting a consistent look

With such a diverse range of communications, produced by such a diverse range of people, we've put together a few simple guidelines around how to present ourselves more consistently and more effectively.

1. Our logo

Keep our logo on a white background wherever possible. This is our main logo and we want to present this version as widely as we can. There's also a practical reason (see point 2).



2. Use of green

Green is the colour of The WI, but so is white. Use the greens primarily through type and sparingly in blocks of colour. Solid type on a white background is easier to read. There is also another practical reason for this. Large blocks of green when printed will use up far more ink toner!



Do this. It's easier to read and easier on toner.



Avoid this. Not the preferred logo, harder to read and uses more toner

3. Other colours

We always want to use green and white as our main colours, but this could become restrictive if that's all we have to use. People may naturally want to use different colours in their posters, presentations or events in order to make some things stand out.

There is now a palette of 'supporting colours' which you can use to add a bit of diversity to your messages. Try and use sparingly though and remember that green is still our core colour. And never change the colour of our logo!



theWI Green
PANTONE 7496
C50 M6 Y99 K42
R118 G136 B56



theWI Warm Yellow
PANTONE 7405
C0 M11 Y97 K2
R242 G205 B20



theWI Rose Pink
PANTONE 700
C0 M40 Y8 K0
R242 G172 B185



theWI Spring Blue
PANTONE 7453
C53 M26 Y0 K0
R123 G166 B222



theWI Dark Green
PANTONE 3308
C100 M0 Y65 K85
R0 G66 B54



theWI Dapple Shade
PANTONE 616
C10 M5 Y49 K6
R208 G200 B131



theWI Pale Violet
PANTONE 2573
C35 M52 Y0 K0
R184 G132 B203

For desktop publishing packages such as Microsoft Word and Powerpoint, please use the RGB colour values. Pantone and CMYK values are for professional designers' and printers' use.

4. Use of typefaces

For most of our professionally produced documents, the main typeface we use is called FS Sally. This guide uses it throughout and it's what you're reading now.

However, most people will not automatically have this on their computers at home. For that reason we recommend you use a typeface called Georgia which is installed as standard on most PCs. You can use this in documents you create in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint or any other desktop packages.



Newsletter. See downloads overleaf to find out where you can get this

Georgia Bold is for headlines

Georgia Regular is used for text

Georgia Italic can be used to highlight words in text or other things such as quotes

Arial can also be used to support Georgia but should be seen as a secondary choice not a primary one.

5. Putting documents together

Templates have been created in Microsoft Word to help everyone create better posters, newsletters and banners. The idea is to get your messages across clearly and consistently wherever possible. Here's an example of a poster template and how to build your message in four easy steps.



1. Choose an image
One good image to depict your message is much stronger than lots of little ones. Keep some white space around it to add more information later.



2. Choose an 'inspirational' message
A message to fire the imagination is different to a message that just describes what something is. Both have a role to play but where possible, play up the inspirational one.



3. Add the information
Now you've caught someone's attention it's important to let them know what the information is. In the case of this booklet it's about 'Women and Environmental Leadership'.



4. Add our logo
Use the colour logo and simply add to the white background. Therefore it is clear and prominent and doesn't get in the way of the messages or the picture.

Visual presentation

WI logo

The bold graphics are designed to signal the beginning of a new era for the WI, while the secondary line has a double meaning signifying that members are both inspired by the WI, and are inspiring women in their own right.

Members can download the WI logo in JPEG, TIFF and EPS formats and the Design Principles document with guidelines on its use.

Because the WI Logo has been trademarked, WIs are required to sign trademark agreements with their federations to use it. Guidelines about this are also available.



Download the logo and guideline documents from the WI Guide area on the Moodle www.witraining.org.uk

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Newsletter & programme templates

Your WI may produce a regular newsletter for members or bulletins about events coming up, and of course every WI has an annual programme of meetings which you may have printed. There are templates to download and fill in if you prefer not to design them from scratch yourself.



Download the newsletter and WI programme templates from the WI Guide area on the Moodle www.witraining.org.uk



WI Membership Promotion

The NFWI has put together some promotional materials to help federations and WIs promote WI membership. There is a promotion pack of items including posters, badges and leaflet holders to use at shows and events. Membership promotion leaflets are available to order through federations.



To find out more go to the WI Guide area on the Moodle www.witraining.org.uk

Poster templates

A range of posters and customisable poster templates are available to download and use for promoting your WI's meetings and events.

Available templates:

- Word template for posters - portrait A4 pale violet.doc
- Word template for posters - portrait A4 spring blue.doc
- Word template for posters - portrait A4 rose pink.doc
- Word template for posters - portrait A4 warm yellow.doc
- Word template for posters - portrait A4 dapple shade.doc
- Word template for posters with picture - portrait A4.doc



To access the posters and templates go to the WI Guide area on the Moodle www.witraining.org.uk

Customisable banner templates

There is a range of banner graphics that can be forwarded to your chosen print company.

Available templates:

- Banner Template - pale violet.doc
- Banner Template - spring blue.doc
- Banner Template - rose pink.doc
- Banner Template - warm yellow.doc
- Banner Template - dapple shade.doc
- Banner - with photo.doc



To access the banners go to the WI Guide area on the Moodle www.witraining.org.uk

Online promotion

Each WI can have its own pages on the NFWI website. It already displays each WI's basic details, such as meeting time and exact location (including postcode) which need to be kept up-to-date, plus you can add more information about groups, activities etc. so potential members can get a better idea of what your WI is like. You can find out more about this from your Federation Web Editor.

If your WI already has a website it can be linked to from your page on the NFWI website. The Design Principles document includes information about bringing the visual style of your external site into line with recommended WI visual presentation to ensure a consistent style is presented to the public.



To find out more go to the WI Guide area on the Moodle www.witraining.org.uk

Ingredients for a good WI

Like all good recipes, if you get the ingredients right, the result will be a success.

Many crucial elements come together to make a successful WI, and the real measure of success is when a WI works for every single member. When all the members work together, from the newest to the longest-established member, from the regular attendees to those who attend occasionally, from the back of the room to the front, then it has the power to become truly inspirational. Everyone needs the opportunity to take part. All WIs work within the framework of the WI constitution and within Charity Law, particularly when fundraising. For more information on this go to *The WI Guide* area on the WI Moodle, www.witraining.org.uk — ‘Running your WI’ section.

Make it inclusive.

Members need to know their contribution is important and valued. That way they'll keep bringing enthusiasm and ideas. Input from every one keeps a WI healthy and is the lifeblood that makes each and everyone feel they are a part of the whole.

Everyone should have an opportunity to be heard and to contribute.

This is not about being formal, but making it clear that, whether speaking aloud or sending an email if someone prefers, their voice will have an audience. From these ideas will sprout new inspiration and will provide refreshing new ideas and new ways of looking at and doing things. There's nothing wrong with doing the same old activities we all know and love, but there is everything to be gained from learning new skills and exposing ourselves to new and different ways of doing things.

It takes effort to keep remembering to look outwards and to keep your WI alive with new inspiration.

It may just be the opportunity to do something that's always been done in a different way, but it shows we can listen; it shows we will give it a try, can adapt if need be and even change. Most of all, it shows that everyone has something to contribute to the whole.

Each meeting is an opportunity to talk.

It sounds obvious but it has been highlighted as one of the main attractions of the WI. A meeting is a time when we can express ourselves as we are, not as the mother, wife, worker or daughter we may be in the rest of our life.

Keep it new, keep it alive.

Overall, there is great interest in ensuring that the range of activities from one meeting to another is of such breadth and diversity that there will automatically be a knock-on effect of the activities appealing throughout the membership. Making sure there is energy injected on a constant basis will ensure healthy interest levels and that members doing the majority of the organising will always be inspired.

Inform and inspire.

All WIs need good publicity and promotional materials with the power to inspire for activities, events and new membership communication. In previous pages the tools required for successful communication are outlined and include links to useful resources. These are the tools that will be used to encourage new members to join an established WI or others to start their own WIs, and illustrate to the outside world what the WI does well.



Speakers

Speakers are an integral part of a WI meeting. A good speaker doesn't have to cost lots of money, some are free, but there's instant inspiration when they introduce a subject everyone wants to know about, whether they even realised it beforehand or not. A member should be asked to look after the speaker and make sure they have everything they need. It is also important that the speaker is introduced and thanked properly. We should encourage our speakers to invite questions and interact with members.

Exhibitions are also praised as instructive events. They can be a talking point, a way of displaying handicrafts, or another way of telling a story with images or a collection of objects. It is also a great way to show off members' talents and hobbies, something each member can be part of and learn from.

An interesting and attractive programme is the image of each WI and shows members and non-members the interests and diversity of our organisation.



The WI is what you make of it.

It's down to each of us to make the WI everything it can be, but there are a few fundamentals.

1. It is vital to give value for money making sure members are satisfied with what their WI offers.
2. How you rate your WI, and what all your members say about it contributes to its identity.
3. The programme of talks, activities and exhibitions you arrange is the image your WI presents internally and externally.
4. Likewise the basics such as the venue where your WI meets can say a lot. For instance, one WI realised that the hall they were in had tap dancing lessons taking place at the same time in the room above them, so it made a lot of sense to relocate! Another WI found a private room in a pub suited them, while public halls work for others.
5. The promotion of the WI is important as new members will bring new energy and inspiration. Good promotion also makes existing members feel good, by saying they have something they can all feel proud of.
6. We all know it isn't rocket science, as they say, but ensuring a meeting isn't rigid in its formality will make everyone more comfortable. Just moving the chairs around from lines into a semi-circle is more inclusive. Suggesting that members move seats can encourage them to mix with different people.
7. It is a good idea to encourage members to take part in discussions so they feel part of making their WI everything they want it to be.
8. In this day and age the value of promotion and communication is obviously important. By this we mean creating newsletters on paper or electronically so members can stay in touch and get involved. There are federation and NFWI resources as well as the WI Moodle where promotional packs, banners, and posters can be downloaded to help you. It doesn't need to be a headache, it can be easy.

Every WI is different and that is one of the great strengths of the organisation. It strives through its diversity. However these fundamental elements help to make the WI inspiring, relevant and successful for women today. They play an important role in ensuring members are engaged, attracting new members and keeping each WI fresh, interesting and motivating.

It's not about change for the sake of change, it's about being relevant

Ultimately the aim is to include everyone. The goal is to make each member feel they have a stake in their WI, that they have member ownership via their contribution and the way it is used.



Roles and responsibilities

It's important that all roles within the WI are clear for existing and new members. Information about who needs to be elected and what they do should be communicated clearly. It makes life simpler for those in key roles and shows others that they too can be considered for those key roles if they are prepared to take on the duties.

Procedures may not be everyone's cup of tea but they are necessary. Running meetings, drafting agendas, taking and writing minutes, keeping the accounts in order—it's all important stuff that needs to be efficiently managed. For more information on this go to *The WI Guide* area on the WI Moodle, www.witraining.org.uk — 'Running your WI' section.

Equality and diversity underpin everything we do in the WI. For more about the NFWI's Equality & Diversity Policy please go to *The WI Guide* area on the WI Moodle, www.witraining.org.uk.



Membership enquiries

Membership enquiries need to be dealt with quickly and efficiently.

Enquiries going to NFWI Headquarters are referred to the relevant federation office where they are followed up usually by a WI Adviser.

Non-members contacting a specific WI need to be followed up by a member of that WI who should give contact details and information about the WI and arrange for a member to 'host' a potential member when she comes to the meeting. It is essential to make all guests feel welcome and included, and encouraged to come again to the next meeting.



The WI Moodle

One of the many benefits of WI membership is access to the WI Moodle, an exciting online environment offering support to WI members. It's a place where you can view information, download documents and share forums with other members as well as learn new skills. You'll need to register for a user name and password, and details on how to do this are included on the home page of the Moodle — just go to www.witraining.org.uk for details.



1. Creative

The WI has always had creativity at its heart, from the many creative activities it engages in through to a more abstract interpretation embracing the WI's open minded and resourceful approach to the issues it takes on.

'I have the attention span of a butterfly if I don't concentrate, so a challenge keeps me focused and allows some of the hundreds of ideas whirling around in my head to come to fruition.' Lesley Fidler, Farnley Estate WI, North Yorkshire West Federation.

2. Active

The WI is an active organisation. Its members are involved in myriad activities; some orientated towards the individual and others toward a wider community.

'It was suggested to me at Denman that I might like to be involved in setting up an Eco team. I have always tried to minimise my impact on planet Earth and I felt this was an opportunity to stimulate others to do the same. I went on to organise the set up and mentoring of eight county teams.' Sylvia Beardshaw, Chaddesley Corbett WI, Worcestershire Federation.

3. Principled

The WI has a long and valued reputation as a practical, positive and principled organisation. Over the last century it has played a fundamental role in women's lives and whenever possible acted in the interests of British society.

'Through the WI I have been involved in the No More Violence Against Women campaign for a number of years now. Most recently to defend women's access to legal aid, which the government is planning on reducing as part of their extensive reforms to the legal aid system ... this is not an ideological issue but one of justice and fairness.' Jeannette Bloomfield, Walsham Le Willows WI, Suffolk West Federation



4. Relevant

The WI has stood the test of time by proving itself to be relevant to both its members and the wider world in a time that has seen more change to the role of women—in society, in the workplace, and at home—than perhaps any other.

*‘The common thread running through all WI campaigns has been a strong appreciation of the need for social and environmental justice, combined with a willingness to take action to achieve it.’
Ruth Bond, Barton WI, Cambridge Federation.*

5. Welcoming

The WI is only as good as the women who join and it has therefore always put great importance on being a welcoming organisation—something every woman should feel is open to her.

‘When a friend and I set up Wimbledon WI three years ago I didn’t know anyone in the area even though I had lived here for most of my adult life. I had hoped to meet new people through the WI but the most surprising friendship I have made is with a woman who has lived in the house directly opposite me for more than 20 years!’ Lou Collis, Wimbledon WI, Surrey Federation.



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