

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

The following guidance is applicable with immediate effect.

Please note this guidance only applies to those areas of England and Wales that have Covid-19 restrictions placed on them. If you are in a part of the country which has no or few local restrictions then you can act in accordance with your local circumstances. 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.

Following a third national lockdown for England and Wales the easing of social restrictions slowly started to be put in place from 8 March: “the roadmap out of lockdown”.

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 urge WIs to continue to adapt and provide a valuable membership experience.

## 1. Wales

### From 27 March:

A maximum of six people from two households can meet socially distanced in private gardens and to exercise outdoors. This excludes children under 11.

If WI members live in the same household, then a maximum of three WI members from that household can either meet one other WI member or three other WI members who are also from the same household.

Social distancing measures must stay in place such as keeping two metres apart, using hand sanitiser as needed and washing hands when you return home.

Please see **3. Practical guidelines for meeting in a maximum of six** below.

Libraries and archives will be able to re-open and there will be a limited opening of outdoor areas of some historic places and gardens.

The ‘stay local’ rule will be replaced by an [interim all-Wales travel area](#), which will remain in place until 12 April, subject to the public health situation. This means that for the next two weeks, only those with a reasonable excuse, such as work, will be able to travel into or out of Wales.

**The Welsh Parliament will review the situation on 1 April and will consider whether all remaining shops, close contact services and wider travel can reopen on the 12 April. This is in line with the planned re-opening in England.**

## 2. England

### From 8 March:

People are allowed to go outside for exercise or recreation in a public outdoor space. This can be with their household or support bubble. In addition people can meet with one person outside of their household or support bubble. Travel is only allowed within your local area.

This means a WI member can meet one other WI member outside for exercise or recreation. For example, you can meet for a walk or to enjoy a coffee on a park bench or even (weather permitting) to have a picnic outside.

Social distancing measure must stay in place such as keeping two metres apart, using hand sanitiser as needed and washing hands when you return home.

### **From 29 March:**

A maximum of six people or two households (the Rule of Six) are allowed to meet outdoors including in private gardens. Social distancing must be maintained, such as keeping two metres apart, etc.

Outdoor sports facilities such as tennis and basketball courts, and open-air swimming pools, will also be allowed to open, and people will be able to take part in formally organised outdoor sports.

This means WI members can arrange for groups of six to meet in either public outdoor spaces such as parks, allotments, woodlands etc. or a private garden.

**Indoor meetings are not allowed.**

## **3. Practical guidelines for meeting in a maximum of six**

### **Risk Assessments**

If you decide to meet outdoors in groups of six as a WI activity then you **must** carry out a risk assessment first. We will be referring to WIs meeting in groups of up to six people as “Breakout Groups” as they are an adaptation to the legal restrictions on the size of social groups.

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

Please make sure you complete any identified actions for safe meetings. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) information on risk assessments is available [here](#). Copies of the risk assessments must be sent to the committee for final authorisation and filing.

### **Vaccines**

Very important: The vaccine programme has started and many members will now have received vaccinations. Please remember that, at the same time, many 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.

There are currently no laws or government guidelines restricting entry to services on the basis of whether or not someone has had the vaccine or whether they can prove they have had a negative test. If this changes we will take this into consideration in our guidelines for members. At the moment members are currently not asked personal questions as part of the joining process, and should therefore not be asked about whether or not they have had the vaccine.

Please remember that safety measures should 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.

### **Insurance**

Please check with your federation and WI insurer to see if you are covered when hosting meetings in your garden before organising to do so.

### **Key meeting safety actions**

The key actions members must take when meeting outside. This includes whether you are meeting as a federation or WI:

- Wash your hands (or use hand sanitiser).
- All attendees should bring their own hand sanitiser. The organiser must also bring a spare hand sanitiser.
- Keep social distancing in place.
- Complete risk assessments.

### **Face coverings outdoors**

The government only stipulates face coverings are worn indoors.

However, NFWI recommends all attendees going to outdoor meetings **arrive** at the meeting wearing face coverings and do not remove them until the required social distancing is in place.

- Please remind members to sanitise their hands before removing their face coverings.
- Some members may feel more comfortable keeping their face coverings on even though you are meeting outside.

### **NHS Test and Trace (England) and Test Trace Protect (Wales)**

Keep a record of everyone who attends a meeting (including in your garden). This is in case you need to provide details for an [NHS Test and Trace procedure](#) (In Wales this is [Test Trace Protect](#))

- 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](#).

### **Managing Breakout Groups of six or less**

Please group together your WI into groups of six or less. Allocate a committee member to each group of six as a Breakout Group Leader. If your WI needs more Breakout Group Leaders please create a team of additional Leaders who will be allocated to the remaining Breakout Groups. Please do not swap members or Leaders into different groups for different meetings.

Keep the Breakout Groups set to the same six (or less) to minimise the risk of virus transmission. There is more information available in [Appendix C: Breakout Groups additional information](#).

### **Booking places**

As there are very strict number limits for social gatherings it may be useful to have a booking system in place.

- All Breakout Group Leaders can invite potential attendees with an RSVP. It is up to you to decide how this is communicated.
- Be clear about how you want to be responded to. Do you prefer e-mails, calls, texts etc. to book a place?
- Give a date to respond by.
- Check your agreed form of communication e.g. e-mail – remember to check junk mail.
- Confirm places.
- If they cannot attend, members must cancel their place in advance wherever possible.

**Very important:** Booking systems must make sure the maximum number possible is six. If a speaker will also be attending then the number of places available to book is five.

There is further information about booking places under [Appendix D: visitors and new members](#).

- 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 Breakout Group Leader 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](#) / [Wales Test Trace](#) Protect or call 111 in England and NHS 111 Wales (currently available in the following health board areas - Hywel Dda, Powys, Aneurin Bevan and Swansea Bay - including Bridgend). If you are outside this area, please call 0845 46 47.

- 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.

**Remember to consider members who may not feel comfortable meeting in person yet (in Breakout Groups). 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](#).**

### **Annual Meetings**

Following a member-wide consultation, the Constitution has been formally updated to allow for

hybrid Annual Meetings. An updated Constitution will be available on My WI from 1 April. 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@nfwl.org.uk](mailto:membership@nfwl.org.uk)

**From 12 April**

The Government will review the infection rate and decide whether the country can proceed to the next step in the roadmap out of lockdown (step two). All being well, outdoor venues and some non-essential retail and public buildings will be allowed to re-open in England from 12 April.

This will give more scope for outdoor activities that Breakout Groups can organise.

Please note people will only be allowed in outdoor venues in a maximum of six people so the Rule of Six outdoors still applies.

As part of this reopening, community centres will also be able to re-open for a limited number of purposes.

From gov.uk: “...indoor events that bring people together - even if they do not mix with other households - must not run until Step three [17 May]. This is only permitted if there is an explicit exemption...”

There are no exemptions for WI meetings. For a list of exempted indoor events allowed in community centres from 12 April please see gov.uk here.

For federations and WIs that own their own halls and may be part of the re-opening on 12 April, there is further information in Appendix G.

**From 17 May**

The Government will review the infection rate and decide if the country can proceed to step three at the earliest on 17 May. Assuming all has gone well with Coronavirus infection rates leading up to this date, this is when indoor meetings in groups of six will be allowed (Rule of Six).

Groups outside will be allowed to meet in a maximum of 30 people.

Again, if you meet either inside or outside as a WI, you will need to carry out a risk assessment.

Please also ensure the following:

- Wash your hands (or use hand sanitiser).
- All attendees should bring their own hand sanitiser. The organiser must also bring a spare hand sanitiser.
- Keep social distancing in place.
- Wear face coverings indoors.
- Keep indoor venues ventilated (keep a window open).

We wish all our members well and look forward to when WIs can meet in full again. Thank you very much for all your efforts to keep your WIs active.

The following Appendices are also available:

- [Appendix A: risk assessment template](#)
- [Appendix B: risk assessment example](#)
- [Appendix C: Breakout groups additional information](#)
- [Appendix D: visitors and new members](#)

- [Appendix E: If a member becomes unwell at a meeting](#)
- [Appendix F: handling money](#)
- [Appendix G: WIs and federations that own their own halls](#)

Document	Version	Last updated
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Link: <https://mywi.thewi.org.uk/running-your-wi/guide-to-running-meetings/resumption-of-wi-meetings>