



Copied from MyWi: <https://mywi.thewi.org.uk/nfwi-news/articles/faqs-covid-19-impact-on-wi-meetings-and-events>

FAQs from NFWI

Covid -19 impact on WI meetings and events

We have received a lot of questions from members about the impact of Covid-19 on WI meetings and members. We hope these FAQs will help to answer a lot of your questions.

Should we cancel WI meetings and events?

With Government advice now focused on the avoidance of non-essential contact, we actively encourage members to follow this new advice and reduce contact as far as possible, particularly for those who are more vulnerable. Many WIs will already have put measures in place to cancel upcoming meetings and events, and are looking at alternative arrangements to ensure they stay connected and support members who may become more socially isolated without their WI meetings and the support network it provides.

How can vulnerable members be supported?

With many people self-isolating, this time will be particularly difficult for vulnerable members, especially people who live alone. Without WI meetings taking place, take time to check on members in your community in other ways. For members who may not have access to a computer or mobile phone, telephone them on their landline regularly to check in and see if they need any support. You could also post notes through members letterboxes asking them to phone you if they need help buying food and other essential supplies. You may wish to set up WI WhatsApp groups or Facebook messenger groups if you haven't done so already, to keep in touch with your members. Sub-groups don't necessarily have to stop, for example, you could try holding your craft groups, book clubs or film clubs via Skype or free conference calling software. Keep an eye on social media and My WI for more ideas in the coming days.

The uncertainty of this situation can be scary and affect our mental health. It is normal to feel vulnerable and overwhelmed as we read news about the outbreak, especially if you have experienced trauma or a mental health problem in the past. While social media can be invaluable for staying connected, it can also circulate a great deal of scaremongering and untrustworthy information surrounding the virus. You can hide content and unfollow pages that are making you feel uneasy alongside stopping news notifications on your phone.

What are the consequences of not having 11 meetings a year as stated in the constitution?

With the uncertainty of this situation and how long it will go on for, it is not possible to say how many meetings may have to be cancelled due to the virus. In order to try and maintain the 11 meetings a year, WIs could consider holding virtual meetings using Skype or Zoom (which are free). This may be slightly easier for some WIs than others depending on how big their membership is, along with their access to the software. In other instances, WIs could move one of their cancelled meetings to August or December, which are the two months when many WIs don't meet or even hold more than one meeting per month later in the year.

These are unprecedented times, so please try not to worry about the constitutional consequences, as many organisations and charities are asking the same questions and we are currently seeking legal advice. We have already been in touch with federations about this and will continue to share information with them when we have updates.

A lot of WIs have also been concerned about cancelling their Annual Meetings and elections. Again, we are seeking legal advice and working with federations to put together guidance.

For the time being, we ask WIs to please focus on supporting other members and keeping connected during the period you are unable to meet.

Can subscriptions be refunded to cover the WI meetings that will be cancelled?

Due to the unprecedented nature of this situation, refunds for cancellations of meetings are not being considered. While it is a very frustrating situation to not be able to attend meetings covered in the membership subscription, the financial implications for WIs, federations and NFWI would be significant if we were to refund or roll-over existing membership subscriptions. We will all, of course, continue to have fixed running costs that will still need to be covered.

What should we do about events and venue cancellations?

The financial implications of event cancellations will vary depending on the venue you have booked with. You should seek advice directly from the venue along with your insurance company regarding their policy. If your WI's insurance is managed at federation level, please contact your federation.

Are the NFWI offices still open?

As of Wednesday 18 March, the NFWI London, NFWI Wales and NFWI–Unit offices have closed and staff are working from home. You will still be able to contact all staff via emails and telephone as normal.

We will still be receiving NFWI mail, including cheques, forms, and general correspondence, but it might take us longer than usual to follow up, so please use e-mail to contact us where possible.