

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WI



## Who we are and what we do

The National Federation of WIs (NFWI) is the largest women's organisation in the UK with over 220,000 members. It is non-sectarian and non-party political and as such is able to influence national and international affairs by becoming involved in campaigns for the environment, education, health and other areas of particular concern to women.

WIs were started in Canada in 1897 by Adelaide Hoodless, a farmer's wife, who wanted women in rural communities to support each other in their daily lives by learning new skills, taking part in social activities, to have fun and to make new friends. Although no longer confined to countrywomen, these aims are still relevant in the 21st Century. The first WI in Britain was established in Anglesey in 1915. Please see [www.thewi.org](http://www.thewi.org) for the full history of the WI.

We see ourselves as "a modern voice for women" and that includes you!



## **Surrey Federation of WIs**

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Guildford, Surrey, GU2 9JX  
01483 233230 [info@surreyfedwi.org.uk](mailto:info@surreyfedwi.org.uk)  
[www.surreyfedwi.org.uk](http://www.surreyfedwi.org.uk)



March 2023

Dear New Member

We would like to welcome you warmly to the Surrey Federation of WIs. We are a band of around 7,500 members, spread across 154 WIs in Surrey.

Membership of the WI offers you a community of like-minded women. You will be able to make new friends, acquire a diverse range of skills, visit new places and campaign on matters that are important to you, both in your community and nationally.

In addition to your own WI, which will offer you a monthly meeting, workshops, visits and much more, you will also be able to access a broader range of activities provided by the Federation. The wider community of the Surrey Federation offers you a major event each year which is the Annual Council Meeting in March. As well as keeping you up to date with current developments, you will also enjoy both challenging and entertaining speakers.

The Federation also provides you with the opportunity to take part in cross-county events e.g. a Literary lunch, a Croquet day and much, much more. You can also attend cookery and craft workshops run by experts in their field, enter competitions and join a Camera Group. For details of Surrey Federation Events go to the website [www.surreyfedwi.org.uk](http://www.surreyfedwi.org.uk) For NFWI events visit Denman at Home at [www.denman.org.uk](http://www.denman.org.uk) The opportunities on offer are endless.

The Federation's monthly publication Surrey WI News, available currently online via the SFWI website and and in hard copy through your WI, will ensure that you are made aware of all such activities, and will keep you entertained with articles and stories about WI life in Surrey, along with the Federation's continually updated social media platforms and website.

You can participate in as much or as little as you wish. Your membership of the WI is what you make it. I hope that you will be inspired.

Very best wishes,

*Angie and Jill*

**Angie Leach and Jill Mulryan**  
**Joint Federation Chair**



## Your WI

Your WI is a place for fun, friendship, laughter and learning.

Your WI meets a minimum of eleven times a year with an events programme arranged by its own committee. As well as these monthly meetings, most WIs have regular interest groups and activities.

As a member, you take part in electing a committee and President every year, ensuring that each WI is run by the members for the members. The on-going strength and vitality of your WI is important, so please consider helping the committee during your membership.

## Your Group

Many WIs belong to a group of neighbouring WIs. They take it in turns to meet together, once or twice a year to "share" a speaker, arrange an activity, outing or demonstration. The Group is a good way of meeting with other members from nearby WIs, and a great way to widen your circle of WI friends.

Please ask your WI committee for details of your Group.

## Your Federation

Your WI belongs to Surrey Federation (SFWI).

Our role is to support the purpose of the NFWI, and we do this through a wide range of activities that allow members to turn their interests into achievements and their concerns into campaigns. We offer you the opportunity to discover your talents, learn new skills and improve the quality of life in your community, alongside all that is on offer in your own WI.



## Surrey WI News

Through our monthly publication, Surrey WI News, we aim to keep you informed of forthcoming events, news, views and opinions from our members and other relevant organisations. This is available online through MYWI and in a hard copy at your WI meetings. Please ask your committee if you don't see it.

## Social media

In addition to SFWI published materials, you may wish to follow us at:

- **Facebook:** Surrey Federation of Women's Institutes
- **Twitter:** @SurreyFedWI
- **Instagram:** [www.instagram.com/surreyfedwi](http://www.instagram.com/surreyfedwi)



## Website

You can check our website for more information:

[www.surreyfedwi.org.uk](http://www.surreyfedwi.org.uk)

## Board of Trustees

The SFWI is run by a Board of Trustees with sub-committees delivering a wide range of events for members from all areas of the county.

Up to fifteen volunteers are elected by Surrey WI members every two years to serve on the Board. The Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and the Treasurer are elected annually by the Board. Further members may be co-opted.

## Sub-Committees and Working Parties

Each SFWI sub-committee deals with a specialist area as follows:

- **Home Economics, Craft & Gardening:** helps members to improve their knowledge and skill in a variety of subjects e.g. cake-decorating, creative card-making, sugar crafts, lace-making, cookery, gardening and many more. They organise demonstrations, lectures, and courses.
- **Events, Leisure and Fundraising:** organises events in art, literature and sport in order to raise funds for the SFWI. This committee also organises the annual audition day for speakers wishing to be included in the Surrey Yearbook. The Yearbook is distributed annually to all WIs and is a useful tool for WIs when planning their annual programmes.
- **Membership:** supports the organisation, growth and development of the WIs and their members through training, positive promotion and visiting WIs.



- **Public Affairs** activities are a link between NFWI and WIs and their members, taking campaigns and resolutions and turning them into local ways our members can work together to support these ideas.

To help our organisation thrive, we need different ideas from new committee members. Why not ask to attend the committee of your choice as an observer – to discover if you would like to join the committee? Just contact a member of the committee or the Federation Office, details of which you will find in this pack or in the Yearbook, of which your WI committee has a copy.





## Resolutions

The WI has a rich history in campaigning and these all start with a resolution. These resolutions respond to a concern or event that a WI feels strongly about.

Each year, in May, your WI will be asked to vote on the NFWI resolutions. These are then taken to the National Annual Meeting where a final discussion and voting takes place. The selected resolutions then become a mandate and campaigning starts.

Over the years, members' concerns have ended in campaigns, for example:

- Keep Britain Tidy (1954)
- Freedom from Hunger (1961)
- Free Family Planning (1973)
- Equality of Opportunity (1975)
- The Dangers of Acid Rain (1980)
- Compulsory DNA testing (1990)
- Care of the Environment (2005)
- Care not Custody (2008)

## WI Advisers

Your WI is a place for fun and friendship. To support our WIs, SFWI has appointed advisers, who have been trained by NFWI. They are linked to the Membership Committee above and their role is to:

- start new WIs;
- give help and advice to members;
- help with resolutions;
- run training days on many aspects of committee work;
- visit annual meetings when requested.

If you wish to contact your adviser, please email [info@surreyfedwi.org.uk](mailto:info@surreyfedwi.org.uk) and you will be put in touch.

- SOS for Honeybees (2009)
- End Plastic Soup (2017)
- Link Together to Alleviate Loneliness (2017)
- Make Time for Mental Health (2018)
- Get on Board for a Better Bus Service (2019)
- Don't Fear the Smear (2019)
- End Modern Slavery (2020)
- A Call to Increase Potential Stem Cell Donor Registration (2020)

Please see [www.thewi.org.uk](http://www.thewi.org.uk) for full details.

## Subscriptions

On joining the WI and then annually in April, you will pay your subscription to your WI Treasurer.

The amount you pay to your Treasurer is divided three ways. Approximately 50% of the fee is kept by your own WI towards its running costs. 25% is paid to SFWI towards its expenses, including the staff salaries. The remainder is paid to the NFWI which covers the cost of eight copies per year of the members' magazine *WI Life* and the running of that tier of the organisation, campaign resources, national activities and national training for volunteers to help run WIs at a local level.

The subscription is reviewed annually by the NFWI, discussed at the National Council and then fixed. Members are notified of the next year's subscription rate during the previous autumn.

The WI is a national organisation whose subscription represents very good value. The more you become involved, the greater your enjoyment and the better value your subscription becomes.

Your own WI uses the subscriptions (supplemented by fundraising) to run your WI. These funds are required to be used in accordance with charity law and accounted for annually to members and SFWI. You are entitled to 11 free meetings a year provided by your own WI. Many WIs offer free extra activities, however costs for 'extra' activities are to be paid by the member, not the WI. Please refer to [My WI](#) for full guidance regarding subscriptions, use of funds and charity guidelines.



## Additional Information



## Your Federation Office

In October 2006, the Federation moved into new, purpose-built offices situated to the north of Guildford town centre on the site of the former Queen Elizabeth Barracks. This is where the day-to-day business takes place, and where the Federation Secretary and staff work closely with the Board of Trustees and sub-committees. It is where the beautiful anniversary wall hangings are displayed, and the Surrey Centenary Commemorative Book can be viewed.

Training courses are also held within the building.

The office is open between 9:00am and 4:00pm Monday to Friday.

## Contact Details

Surrey Federation of WIs  
6 Paris,  
Parklands,  
Railton Road,  
Guildford,  
Surrey,  
GU2 9JX.

T: 01483 233230

E: [info@surreyfedwi.org.uk](mailto:info@surreyfedwi.org.uk)

W: [www.surreyfedwi.org.uk](http://www.surreyfedwi.org.uk)

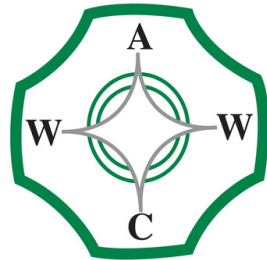


# Associated Country Women of the World

When you join the WI you become connected with the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), as the WI is a member society.

ACWW links together over 300 societies with a total membership of more than 9 million women in about 80 countries. All societies are, like the WI, non-party political, non-racial and non-sectarian. They work together to raise the standard of living of rural women, to promote international friendship and understanding and to be a voice for countrywomen in international matters.

WIs in Surrey contribute to the "WI Pennies for Friendship" voluntary scheme which is the backbone of funding for the projects of ACWW.



In addition, members have contributed to special projects such as "sending a cow to Uganda", building and equipping a grain store in Kenya and helping survivors of the Tsunami in Sri Lanka.

You can choose to become a member of ACWW and get more involved if you wish. Our ACWW Representative can be contacted through the Federation office. She is happy to visit WIs and talk to them on all aspects of ACWW.



Associated Country Women of the World,  
A04 Parkhall,  
40 Martell Road,  
London, SE21 8EN

T: 020 7799 3875

E: [info@acww.org.uk](mailto:info@acww.org.uk)

W: [www.acww.org.uk](http://www.acww.org.uk)

# NFWI Charter

## 1. Introduction

This document outlines the principles of the partnership between the NFWI and its members and explains what members can expect from being part of the SFWI. It also outlines what NFWI staff can expect from members. This is a living document and will be regularly reviewed to ensure it reflects feedback from members and changes to resourcing at NFWI.

The WI is based on the ideals of fellowship, truth, tolerance, and justice. In all that we do, members and staff are expected to demonstrate and operate with these values.

## 2. Principles

The partnership between the NFWI and its members is based on the following five principles.

### 2.1 Support

The three tiers of the NFWI (WI/federation/NFWI) exist to ensure all members are effectively supported and can get the very best from their WI experience. This relationship is one of partnership and shared purpose. All members should feel able to contact the NFWI for advice and guidance.

### 2.2 Feedback

All members, at any level of the organisation, should feel able to share views, comments, and feedback on their experience and this is actively encouraged to support the ongoing development of the organisation and a culture of continuous improvement. Feedback will be received in an open and constructive manner, with formal follow-up as appropriate.

### 2.3 Structure

The NFWI has a three-tier federated structure to ensure effective and timely support is available. WI-specific enquiries should be directed to the relevant federation in the first instance. These will then be escalated to the NFWI if necessary.

### 2.4 Communication

All views, comments and feedback should be shared respectfully and appropriately and within the values of the NFWI.

Members can phone, write, or email to share their feedback. NFWI staff have individual email addresses, but there are also a number of general email addresses if you do not know the name of the staff member you wish to contact.

# The NFWI Code Of Conduct

## 1. Introduction

The WI is an organisation centred on friendship, campaigning, education, and fun. We are a place for all women where members are welcomed, supported and able to fully enjoy their membership and utilise all the opportunities that comes with it.

## 2. WI Members

WI members must:

- Demonstrate the WI values of truth, tolerance, justice, and fellowship
- Be kind and considerate towards others
- Use inclusive and polite language
- Share views, comments, and feedback respectfully and appropriately
- Respect others at all times
- Feel able to make mistakes and learn from these
- Raise concerns and complaints
- Comply with applicable WI, federation and NFWI policies
- Ensure the WI is a place for all women by welcoming new members
- Avoid bringing the organisation into dispute

## 3. Trustees

WI and federation trustees must:

- Act in the best interests of the WI as a whole including federations and the NFWI
- Respect and maintain confidentiality
- Support the decision of the majority
- Work in partnership with each other
- Act within the governing documents and the law
- Manage conflicts of interest effectively
- Ensure concerns and complaints are followed up appropriately
- Carry put their role with the WI vision statements in mind; bold and inspiring, growing, and relevant, flexible, and inclusive

## 4. Unacceptable behaviour

The NFWI has a zero-tolerance policy of discrimination of any type, including racism, homophobia, and transphobia, and of any behaviour that intends to cause distress to another. Any such behaviour must be reported and must be reported and will be investigated.

## 5. Resources

This code must be read alongside the following NFWI policy/guidance documents:

- NFWI Charter
- NFWI Complaints Policy
- NFWI Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
- NFWI Social Media Code of Conduct

## **2.5 Respect**

All members and staff have the right to respect and to feel safe. Offensive or disrespectful behaviour will not be tolerated and may end in disciplinary procedures (staff) or barring of an individual from contact with the NFWI (members). The same is true for members, who will always be treated with respect and courtesy whenever they contact NFWI; the relationship is one of mutual respect and tolerance.

## **3. Response**

The NFWI operates a target response time for all enquiries received. This is outlined below. This response time is published for transparency and to manage expectations. This is the standard that members can expect and are entitled to challenge this if necessary. Individual NFWI staff teams operate target response times which vary based on the capacity of each team and the average volume of enquiries received.

Whilst the NFWI aims to provide an immediate response to last minute requests when it can, this will not always be possible. Where information is required and this is known in advance, we ask that you provide as much notice as possible. If an enquiry is an emergency, then this should be directed by phone to the NFWI London Office.

With enquiries on behalf of multiple individuals, such as those from a whole WI or a WI Committee, we ask that the enquiry is sent only once. Multiple enquiries from different individuals on the same topic can slow down our ability to respond to enquiries within our agreed timescales.

## **4. Response times**

The NFWI aims to respond to all enquiries – regardless of the method of communication - within 10 working days of receipt. Please note that hard copy letters may take several days to reach the NFWI (all letters are date stamped on receipt).

All emails sent to our generic email addresses (see list below) will receive an automatic acknowledgement so that it is clear that the email has been received. All enquiries will be responded to via email or phone, unless the nature of the response requires a hard copy reply.

## **5. Resources**

This Charter must be read alongside the following NFWI policy/guidance documents:

- NFWI Code of Conduct
- NFWI Complaints Policy
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- NFWI Social Media Code of Conduct