



WI guidance regarding resuming meetings

NB “You” is used throughout this document as it makes it easier to read but please be aware “you” refers to the WI committee members and those organising the meeting.

It is with great excitement that we receive news of further lockdown easing from the government which is allowing bingo halls, restaurants and community centres to reopen. Why? Because it means we can use this guidance to restart WI meetings across the country as safely as possible and we know many of you have already been contacted by the halls and meeting places you use to notify you of their plans. However, we also know that government advice is continually reviewed and updated and so we wanted to provide you with a summary of the current guidance that will support you in deciding when to return to your meetings. This document will be updated periodically to reflect any significant changes in government advice.

Brief guidance – please note these are guidelines and do not provide 100% guarantee of a risk free environment. This document aims to summarise the key elements of the changes to government guidance and what they might mean for you. Any return to face to face meetings should only be done following a full risk assessment (see below) and with agreement from your Committee about how to proceed.

The timing of any return to meetings is yours to decide and must be agreed based on the best interests of your Members.

Please follow sensibly and check any guidance on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) you feel you need to ensure you have all the information you need to make your decision

The following guidance is applicable from 1st August. (Please note the government’s guidance applies from 4th July, the 1st August has been identified as a date to issue NFWI guidance so WIs have time to carry out a risk assessment and assess the safety precautions needed as part of planning restarting meetings. It in no way obliges WIs to open in August).

The safety of our members is the priority. Only resume meetings when you and your WI feel safe enough to do so. Risk assessments must be done and safety precautions must be in place – more details below. These must not be rushed.

If your WI owns a hall you are not under any obligation to reopen until you feel the appropriate safety measures are in place. Please read the information sheet created by the charity Action with Communities in Rural England (acre) and available as a click through on its [website](#).

NB: [Wales](#) has issued different easing lockdown guidance to England. As of 4th July Wales is still only allowing people from two different households to meet. This means WIs in Wales are currently unable to start meeting again. This will also be the case for any WIs in areas under regional lockdown.

NB: [The Isle of Man](#) has lifted all social distancing measures. WIs on the Isle of Man need to follow local rules.

NB: [Guernsey](#) has no known active COVID-19 cases at the time of signing-off this guidance. This means Guernsey is ahead of the rest of the UK with easing lockdown. WIs based in the Bailiwick of Guernsey need to follow local rules.

NB: COVID-19 infection rates will change over time. Regional differences can change. Please keep up-to-date with your most relevant local and government rules.

Meeting venue basics

- You can meet in an indoor venue but the number of people present in your meeting must be a maximum of 30.
- You will be required to **carry out a risk assessment before the first meeting and regularly review this before each subsequent meeting**. Please make sure you action any identified changes for safe meetings. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) information on risk assessments is available [here](#). A template is provided with this guidance.
- 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](#). **NB Test and Trace is England only. This is the [guidance for Wales Test Trace Protect](#).**
- You can use your signing in register (which you would have in place for fire safety).
 - Make sure it is dated.
 - Adapt it with a visitors and speakers page where they add their contact details. People to 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 protect if electronic.
 - Make sure all attendees understand it will be used for NHS Test and Trace if necessary.
 - Make sure it is kept for 21 days.
- Add spare masks and gloves to your first aid kit, one set for the responder and one set for the patient; add a disposable plastic apron for the responder. Add these to the list of first aid items

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that need replenishing. Consider getting your own first aid kit if you currently rely on your venue providing one.

- Be confident to [give first aid](#) (if trained and it is needed). Always call an ambulance in an emergency.
- Have a designated space for where to move people who become unwell at meetings with COVID-19 symptoms until the ambulance or transport home arrives.
 - Provide tissues and a bowl of warm soapy water and paper towels for hand washing and drying.
 - Double bag the tissues and paper towels in two bin bags.
 - On the outer bag fix a clear notice that states COVID waste with the date and time. This will need to be stored safely for 72 hours before being placed in the general waste collection.
 - If you hire your venue the building manager should make the designated space and procedure clear.
- Manage attendees arriving & leaving at the same time with socially distanced queuing.
- If possible have a different entrance door and exit doors.
 - If a different entrance and exit is **not** possible, e.g. this doesn't allow for access needs such as ramps, remind attendees to be aware when entering and exiting the building of on-coming people and to give each other space.
 - If you use a fire door as your exit, the last person leaving must be tasked with closing this door and leaving by the main door. This is to maintain security.
- **Very important: In the case of an emergency e.g. fire alarm do not insist on socially distancing to leave the building. Get everyone out according to fire safety regulations i.e. quickly and calmly through the nearest fire exist.**
- Maintain social distancing during the meeting. This is 2 metres but can now be halved to 1 metre if 2 metres is not viable as long as appropriate safety measures have been put in place.
- However put 1.5 metres in place to allow for "wriggle room". Carers and those they care for and members from the same household or "[support bubble](#)" do not need to maintain this social distance.
- Mark the social distancing places out and have chairs placed inside ready for when attendees arrive and ask Members not to move them.
- Remember to wipe chairs down as you place them.
- It is safer to have chairs facing the same direction if possible, if not possible still ensure that you stick to 2 metres distance.
- When you have marked out your attendee spaces, calculate how many members can safely attend a meeting. Even though the maximum number allowed at a gathering is 30, your venue may accommodate far less with social distancing measures in place.
- If your WI membership is greater than the maximum number that can safely attend, think about how you are going to manage numbers. For example, is holding additional meetings with alternating attendees possible?
- Please have [hand sanitiser](#) in place for when attendees arrive, (members may wish to bring their own hand sanitiser which they must use on arrival into the venue).

- Keep your venue as ventilated as possible. Open windows and doors (not internal fire doors) if the building allows for this. Remember to close windows and doors at the end of meetings for security.
- Please ask attendees to wear face coverings.
- Remind them to wash their hands or use hand sanitiser before and after adjusting face coverings.
 - NB. Some people will not be wearing face coverings for health reasons e.g. disabilities or mental health – please ask members to let the President know beforehand if they [are unable to wear face coverings](#). Please deal with this information sensitively. Let members know that those who can wear face coverings are expected to do so, and please do not enquire about individual exemptions other than your own.

Keeping your venue safe

- If your venue is shared with others or open to the public then ensure you have a copy of the venue's risk assessment and that one is available on site.
- If your WI owns its own hall then please read the [information sheet](#) created by the charity Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE).
- Provide written guidance that can be distributed to members and guests ahead of each meeting detailing the safety procedures in place and any expectations of individuals (some of which are detailed below).
- Establish what the venue's cleaning schedule is and how it links with public access.
- Think about how you are going to keep the shared facilities safe and maintain the required hygiene standards while you are using them.
- Door knobs, cupboard handles and light switches will need to be regularly wiped with a chlorine based cleaning product e.g. bleach. Remember you cannot spray light or electrical switches these must be wiped.
- As part of your risk assessment, walk around your meeting place and identify any other high-use items and areas that will need wiping – **make a check list and attach it to your risk assessment.**
- Identify who is going to be tasked with maintaining the cleanliness of the venue. Make sure this person has been identified before the meeting and knows where the equipment is (you may need to provide your own wipes and sanitiser) and how often they should be cleaning the venue during the meeting. There are no absolute rules about this so you will need to adjust to what you are comfortable with and feel is sensible based on the venue and the activities planned.
- If you have high-traffic areas such as a shared kitchen you should consider limiting who can use it e.g. one person is identified pre-meeting to use the area if needed e.g. to get / return cleaning equipment (it is likely you will be asked to bring your own equipment, check with the venue).
- For areas where you cannot limit the number of people using it e.g. toilets, mark out socially distanced queuing spaces

- You may also be expected to take all the WIs rubbish home, so bring bin bags (If you rent or share your meeting venue you must refer to the guidance and responsibilities set out by the management for the building).
- Shared facilities which all members will be using such as toilets **must** be cleaned regularly by anyone using them. You must have clear guidance on the responsibility of individuals for cleaning toilets and surrounding areas after use. If you rent or share your meeting venue you must refer to the guidance & responsibilities set out by the management for the building.
- If your WI owns its own building it will be your responsibility to set out the toilet use guidance e.g. how often they are cleaned thoroughly (particularly if the space is rented out to others), that every person using the toilet is responsible for wiping the surfaces they touch etc. You will need to provide wipes in every cubicle; toilet handles, seats, and cubicle doors should be wiped by the individuals using the toilet that has touched them and then disposed of in a bin provided. You should also ensure there is a way to dry hands after washing.
- Attendees **must** [wash their hands thoroughly](#) for at least 20 seconds after using the toilets and throughout the meeting as appropriate based on the activities planned. It is a good idea to have clear "[wash your hands](#)" signage displayed in all areas with a sink and in the main meeting room / space.
- It is a good idea to display signage that reminds attendees [not to touch their face](#).

Meeting activities

- Your planned programme will need to be reviewed based on the current [Covid-19 guidance](#) as despite the lifting of restrictions, some activities are still prohibited. Please also be aware that this guidance is continually changing, so will need to be reviewed periodically.
- Sadly group singing is not allowed, including choirs, so no singing of Jerusalem for now.
- It is recommended that **food and beverages are not served at WI meetings** to reduce the risk of virus transmission.
- Please let members know food and drink will not be served. They can bring food for their own consumption if they wish but they must not share with anyone outside of their support bubble.
- Please ask attendees to use the hand sanitiser on their way out and remind them to wash their hands when they get home.

Additional precautions

- All attendees must use tissues when sneezing, dispose of them safely and wash their hands or use hand sanitiser if hand washing facilities are not easily accessed.
- All attendees must cough into the crooks of their elbows wash their hands or use hand sanitiser if hand washing facilities are not easily accessed.
- Catch it, Bin it, Kill it [posters](#) are available
- 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.

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- 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 you if they develop COVID-19 symptoms within 7 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 [test and trace](#) information.

Extra information

- Government advice says: “We know that people 70 and over, those with certain underlying conditions and pregnant women may be more clinically vulnerable, so we have advised them to take particular care to avoid contact with others.”
- In light of the above you could ask members if they fall into any of these groups and if they wish to attend meetings think about how you can increase safety precautions e.g. can 2 metre distancing be accommodated for all? Can the most vulnerable members be in spaces with the least passing traffic e.g. along a wall with a clear (as possible) route to the door? Can they be advised to bring their own hand sanitisers to further limit contact?
- If members cannot attend meetings think about how to maintain contact so they don't get left out. **The proportion of your members who could attend face-to-face meetings should be a factor in your decision-making when deciding when to return to physical meetings.**
- Never take a chance on visiting a clinically vulnerable person if you think you have COVID-19 symptoms, however mild.
- Never attend meetings or visit a clinically vulnerable person if you have been advised to isolate by NHS Test and Trace because you have been in contact with a case of COVID-19.
- You must include collecting money in your risk assessment. If possible encourage members to use online banking. Guidance on card machines is now available on [My WI](#).
- If cash is used, please think about how to make this as safe as possible. Can you introduce a payment desk, with a hand sanitiser and maintain socially distanced queuing? Can a pre-meeting identified member walk round the venue and collect money at a specified time e.g. right at the end?
- Please make sure this member is wearing gloves when handling money and washes her hands / uses hand sanitiser afterwards.
- Please ask members to wash their hands / use hand sanitiser after handling money.
- Remember to put the above cash handling procedure in place if selling raffle tickets e.g. a specified raffle selling station, with hand sanitiser and social distance queuing, wear gloves, wash hands. Consider a card machine.
- Remember to check your insurance cover with your insurer. COVID-19 is a new risk, is this covered in your policy? **You must make clear to members they do not have to come to meetings if they don't feel safe.** All members are welcome but a 100% risk free environment is impossible to provide. It is up to each individual member to assess if she feels safe enough to attend.

Travelling

- If possible walk, cycle or drive to the meeting.
- If a member is in a [support bubble](#) with another member they may share a car to travel to the meeting. Otherwise car sharing is discouraged as this increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission. However there may be instances when a member has no other travel alternative then sharing a car.
- Government guidance on car sharing is available [here](#)
- If you have to use public transport
 - Always wear a face covering (remember that some people will not be wearing a face covering due to health reasons).
 - Use hand sanitiser before and after adjusting your face covering.
 - Maintain social distancing.
 - Give yourself extra time for the journey as social distancing may mean public transport becomes full quickly.
 - Before and during your journey, check with your transport operator for the latest travel advice on your route:

[Bus, coach, tram or ferry](#)

[National rail](#)

[TfL](#)

Outdoor meetings / activities

Some WIs may choose to hold meetings outdoors or plan outdoor events.

- [Risk assessments](#) need to be carried out for outdoor meetings and reviewed before each subsequent meeting.
- Outdoor meetings also have a maximum of 30 attendees.
- Remember the Great British weather. Recommend attendees bring an umbrella and make it clear that there will be no indoor option in inclement weather.
- Social distancing must be maintained outdoors. This is 2 metres which can be reduced to 1 metre if 2 metres is not viable and steps are taken to reduce the risk of transmission such as:
 - Plan activities where attendees can be side-by-side rather than opposite each other. If they are opposite maintain a 2 metre distance.
 - Ask attendees to wear face coverings.
 - Ensure there is [hand sanitiser](#) available for attendees and ask attendees to bring their own to minimise contact.
 - No singing, even outside.
 - No food or drinks to be provided by the WI. Members are very welcome to bring what they require.
 - No food or drink sharing between members.

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Finally

- Stay safe and Have fun!!

We know that members will have thought of much of this information already and will be looking at ways of resuming their WI activities as safely as possible. However we hope that this document will provide a framework for those about to undertake their risk assessment. If you are concerned about anything relating to the risk assessment process or the resumption of WI activities then please contact your federation or the Membership and Engagement team at NFWI at membership@nfwl.org.uk