

New WI Supporter options FAQs

We are introducing options for people to support the work of the WI by making donations and becoming WI Supporters.

1. Why include WI Supporters now?

The WI is the largest voluntary women's organisation in the UK and we strive to be recognised as a leading voice on women's issues, relevant, and welcoming of all women. However we are not currently reaching all women, or offering something that all women are able to, or want to, engage with. With this in mind, we have been working hard to develop ways for the WI to engage with a wider audience. Introducing different levels of support and engagement at different price points is a well-established path many other national organisations offer.

The WI Strategic Vision demonstrates our collective goal to provide the WI with a sustainable and exciting future. We are all committed to being Growing and Relevant, Bold and Inspiring, Inclusive, and Flexible, and we believe the introduction of these new options takes us closer to these aims. The Strategic Vision was a collective effort from all our members, and we know our members are also committed to seeing the WI thrive, grow, and remain relevant.

2. What are WI Supporters?

These are options for people who are interested in the WI and support what we do, but are unable, or unwilling, to join as members. Many of you helped us to find out what women want from the WI by sharing our recent non-member survey with family and friends. Of those who responded, most women had heard of the WI and would consider joining. Their main reasons for not joining included lack of time, overriding commitments such as caring responsibilities or work, and not being able to find a local group that suited them. The survey showed that there is a significant number of women who are interested in the WI's work and want to engage with us but are not ready to join as a member. This is who our WI Supporters will be, people interested in the WI's work, who want to support us and become part of the WI family but won't actually be members. They will be able to make a donation to the WI and choose their level of engagement from the WI Supporter options provided. There will be two levels of WI Supporters.

1) WI Supporters

This is an option for anyone who wants to make a donation to the WI to support our work and receive information. They will be able to choose how much they donate to the WI, with a minimum donation of £5. They can make either a one-off donation via the website with a credit/debit card or set up a regular donation via Direct Debit. WI Supporters will receive an engagement

package including the NFWI Newsletter and Public Affairs email newsletters. They will also receive occasional Public Affairs surveys when we are doing research and want to engage more people with our campaigns. WI Supporters will be able to opt out of any of the above communications to tailor what they receive. There will also be the option to give a donation without receiving any communication from the WI. We also know from the response at events that there are plenty of men who support our work and values too. The WI Supporter option is a great way to engage interested men with the WI's work.

2) WI Supporter Plus

This is only for women. WI Supporter Plus is an option that gives more engagement with the WI. It is for women who want to hear from us and what we are doing and want the opportunity to get more involved with the WI but without committing to becoming members. The WI Supporter Plus acts as a 'taster' of what a WI membership could give you. The minimum donation for a WI Supporter Plus is £18. As with WI Supporters, they will receive an engagement package of the NFWI newsletter, public affairs email newsletter and our social media. They will also receive:

- Campaign resources with asks and actions
- Limited Access to My WI
- 10% discount on their first purchase in the WI Shop as a welcome
- 8 issues of WI Life a year
- Two free Denman courses, one live and one on demand course (this will be a one-off, given as a welcome)

3. Why weren't members informed or given the chance to vote on the WI Supporters options?

The WI is, and will always be, shaped by our members. WI members are our leaders, the strength of the WI is built on the collective strength of its members, and everything the WI means is established by the members. The WI Strategic Vision, crafted by WI members, demonstrates our collective goal: to provide the WI with a sustainable and exciting future. It is from this direction, provided by WI members, that we have been working to widen the appeal of the WI and provide more ways for women to engage with us and have created the WI Supporter options. In addition, we have consulted with all federations at National Council meetings to help shape the WI Supporter Options.

4. Will WI Supporters be members and will they be able to have any input into shaping the WI?

The WI is a unique organisation shaped by its members and has been so since 1915, nothing will change that! The WI Supporter options are here to support the WI's work. It is important to emphasise that WI Supporters will not be members of the WI, but supporters of what we do. They will not have the same rights or benefits as members. They will not have monthly meetings, they will not be able to vote on resolutions or other constitutional matters, nor put forward new resolutions.

5. Why are WI Supporter options cheaper compared to the subscription price members pay?

WI Supporters are not members and will not be associated with a particular federation or WI. They will have the option to make a donation with the minimum donation being £5. In return they will receive regular communication about the WI's work. These new options are not offering a cheaper membership, but a different way for NFWI to engage with a wider audience. Those who engage with us on this level will not be members, but supporters of what we do. The WI membership subscription will continue to be decided, per the Constitution, in consultation with both the Board of Trustees and the National Council. The NFWI Board always work hard to keep the fee down as much as possible and WI members will always get a full and wide range of WI benefits for their subscription fee.

6. How will introducing WI Supporter Options affect WI members?

Introducing new WI Supporter options will benefit you, our members, for many reasons. Firstly, it will give the WI a wider audience and louder voice allowing us to become an even more effective campaigning force on the issues that matter to women and their communities. As well as this, it will bring more women into the WI sphere, which will hopefully in turn give more women the opportunity to find out more about membership and join as members. We also hope it will bring in a larger income, meaning that in the future we will need to rely less on membership subscriptions.

7. The WI is founded on its members and membership, what is the point of being a member when I can be a supporter?

These new options are not offering a cheaper membership, but a different way for the NFWI to engage with a wider audience. Those who engage with us on this level will not be members and will not have the same rights or benefits as members. We are confident in our current membership offering and know how much our existing members value their experience. If members choose to end their membership to become WI Supporters instead, it is likely we would have lost them anyway and so we are glad we will now have an option to engage with women who are unable to participate fully as WI members but who still want to stay connected to the WI.

8. Can WI members also get 10% off a purchase in the WI Shop?

Members are already offered the opportunity to enjoy a discount in the WI Shop at various times in the year such as WI Day in September. Members are also sent the voucher booklet with numerous offers to take advantage of. WI Supporters will only be offered one purchase in the WI Shop with a 10% discount.

9. Can WI members be given two free Denman Courses?

Denman already offers a number of free courses throughout each year which are available to WI members.

10. If WI Supporters are not members why do they get access to My WI?

Only the WI Supporter Plus option gets access to My WI. This is part of giving a 'taste' of the WI and is why the option is restricted to women. It is important to note that the WI Supporter Plus option gives limited access to My WI, only WI Members have full access.

11. Why can't the WI let people just donate? My friends and family want to donate without joining.

Donation options are available.

12. Can I buy a Supporter or Supporter Plus option for a friend or family member?

Yes both Supporter and Supporter Plus options will be available to buy as gifts for someone else. We all know women who would be such a wonderful part of our WI family. Members have shared stories of daughters, mothers, aunts, colleagues and friends who want to be in the WI but can't make it work for them right now. The WI Supporter Plus options will be a new way to reach out, include these women and share the joy of being part of the WI family.

13. Can men be WI Supporters?

The WI Supporter option is open to men, because men can and should support the WI and our ethos as an organisation. Men can be WI Supporters by opting for the WI Supporter option which has a £5 minimum donation and will mean they receive the campaigns email newsletters and NFWI Newsletter. They can also make a donation to support our work without receiving any communications from us. Men can also buy a WI Supporter Option or WI Supporter Plus Option as a gift for a woman they know. It is important to emphasise that men cannot be a WI Supporter Plus, which is only open to women because it acts as a 'taster membership'.

14. Why can men not be WI Supporter Plus?

WI Supporter Plus gives more access to the WI than a WI Supporter. A Supporter Plus gets access to My WI, receives WI Life, and receives more information from Public Affairs. In effect WI Supporter Plus can act as an entry point to the WI membership, so is only suitable for women.

15. Will WI Supporters have the option to attend meetings or vote?

WI Supporters are not members of the WI. They will not have the same rights or benefits as members. They will not have monthly meetings or the right to vote on any WI matters. WI Supporters can visit a WI as a visitor, the same as any other woman. WIs are able to ask for either a visitor's fee or a donation (donations can be used for gift aid), at the discretion of the individual WI. If a WI Supporter is a man, he can only visit a WI if the WI is holding an event which is open to all the public.

16. Is the WI going to change now?

Yes and no. The WI takes pride in being the largest voluntary women's organisation in the UK, and in our inspiring history we have consistently championed the education and rights of women, and will continue to do so. However, the WI is constantly growing adapting. Introducing WI Supporters options will help us grow and be relevant. WI Supporter options will change the WI in a positive way, as it is an entry point to eventual membership.

17. If men can be WI Supporters, what does this mean for our Public Affairs survey results?

We want men to have the opportunity to support us, as we know many men do, those men may choose to opt-in to receive the Public Affairs surveys. Where responses are only required from women this will be made clear in the survey and filtering questions will be used to ensure they are only completed by women. Men will be able to forward these surveys to women they know where relevant, to help support the WI in our campaign work.

18. Can men be WI members?

No, the WI is a women's organisation.

19. Which NFWI policies will relate to our new WI Supporters?

WI Supporters are not members so most of the WI policies are not relevant. Supporters will need to be aware of our values and ethos and understand that this is what we stand for, and this is what they are agreeing to stand with when they support us. This will be covered in the WI Supporters Terms and Conditions when they sign up. The Complaints Policy will still be relevant if a Supporter wishes to make a complaint, and these complaints will go directly to NFWI.

20. What is the payment structure for WI Supporters?

WI Supporters will be able to make a donation to support the work of the WI via the 'donate' button on the website. They will be able to choose between making a one-off payment with a credit/debit card or making a regular donation with a Direct Debit. WI Supporters will be able to choose how much they donate with a minimum donation of £5. WI Supporter Plus will have a minimum donation of £18. There will be information on the website explaining the different options people can choose. Supporters will also be able to make donations via the website, at external events such as Stylist Live, or save a QR code which takes them to the donation information so they can make a payment in their own time.

21. Will Federations and WI groups be expected to collect supporter donations at their events?

WIs and Federations will not be obliged to collect supporter donations. Members of the public can make one-off or regular donations at events, but this will still be via the website. Those WIs and Federations that have devices such as a tablet and want to take donations will need to check there will be an internet connection available. Of course please continue to collect donations for your own WIs and/or local causes in your usual way

22. Is there a lower age limit for Supporters and Supporter Plus?

In line with our membership eligibility, we will have a lower age limit of 18. This will mean that we can remain confident that all the material we produce is age appropriate e.g. campaign information related to End Violence Against Women. The lower age limit may be reviewed in the future.

23. Why can we not pay by Direct Debit for our WI membership?

The WI Supporters are not members and their payments will be processed directly by NFWI. With regards to our members subscription payments, the structure of the organisation poses a challenge as members pay at local level and the WIs pass the appropriate share to the federation which, in turn, passes the appropriate share to NFWI. This makes introducing direct debit much more complicated as it would require a complete overhaul of payment systems and a very large amount of administration work at the NFWI level. However, it is still an option the NFWI is tentatively looking into.

24. Can we pay by credit/debit card for our WI Membership?

Your WI can choose to purchase a card machine for members to pay by credit/debit card. However, there are a number of considerations your WI will need to think about before deciding if a card machine will suit your WI such as the upfront costs and how

often you will use it. There is guidance on [My WI](#) to help your WI decide whether to get a card machine.

25. Where are the funds raised from the WI Supporter options going?

They will go towards supporting the work of the WI and our campaigns.

26. If NFWI is raising money via supporters does this mean that our membership subscription will reduce as it will cover the NFWI portion of the subscription?

Everything that NFWI does to raise unrestricted income has a direct benefit to members. It is through income generating activity at national level that NFWI is able to continue to subsidise the costs of delivering member services, absorb any external price rises and ensure membership fees remain at a reasonable level.

27. Can the donate button and the Supporter Plus options be used to make a donation to my local WI and/or federation?

No, we would not be able to separate the specific monies given as a donation for this purpose. Your local WI is a charity in its own right and any donations meant for your local WI need to be made directly to that WI group. Likewise, donations meant for a specific federation need to be made directly to that federation. Please find the details of each federation [here](#).

28. Can WI Supporter options be paid by cheque or over the phone?

Unfortunately, we do not have the resources to process payments over the phone or by cheque. WI Supporters will be able to pay directly via the website.

29. Some of our older members, who can no longer attend meetings, would benefit from being able to become WI Supporters Plus if they still wanted to be connected to the WI. Why isn't there a non-online payment option for them or a way to receive the WI Supporter Plus information by post?

Unfortunately, we do not have the staff resources to post out the Supporter Plus information such as the NFWI newsletter, on a large scale and we don't want to make promises we would struggle to keep. However, this option gives the WI Life subscription, is less than the current Associate Scheme and your older members may be able to still receive news from your WI (at your WI's discretion), so this may be an option that you can adapt to help keep them connected.

30. Will the WI Supporter Plus option have a pro rata?

No, a WI Supporter Plus is making a donation, not taking out a membership.

31. If a WI Supporter wants to become a member during the subscription year do they pay the full amount or the pro rata amount?

WI Supporters are not members so if a WI Supporter chose to take out a WI membership they would get the pro rata rate from July onwards as long as they had not been a WI member in the previous WI subscription year.

32. When will these support options be available?

We are aiming to launch them in April 2023.

33. Are you reviewing the Associates?

The Associates scheme is staying as it is, but we may review this option in the future. We will be informing current Associates that these WI Supporter options will be available, along with virtual WI membership, as an alternative to the higher priced Associate membership.

34. Can people who live outside the UK be WI Supporters?

Yes! We welcome international supporters. They would need to meet the same conditions as people who live in the UK i.e. be aged 18 or over and, for the WI Supporter Plus option, be a woman. International supporters will receive the same great engagement package but with a few small provisos. The WI Supporter Plus option will include a digital copy of WI Life not a paper copy. In addition, the WI Shop only accepts orders that can be sent to a UK address including the Channel Islands, so this may affect international supporters' utilising the 10% discount in the WI Shop.

35. How can WIs promote the WI Supporter options?

There will be new promotional material available about the WI Supporter Options. We recommend that WIs always promote their own WI membership as a priority but have promo material and information available for people who want to support the WI and those women who are interested in engaging with us but not yet ready to be a member. You can ask them to support us by joining as WI Supporters. This will help maintain an interest in the WI and make it more likely that they become members in the future.