

National Federation of Women's Institutes

The WI is the largest voluntary women's organisation in the UK, with approximately 222,000 members in 6,300 WIs.



The WI was established in 1915 to enable women to play an effective part in their communities and help in the production of food during the First World War. Since then, the aims of the organisation have broadened and the WI today plays a unique role in providing women with educational opportunities and the chance to build new skills, as well as influencing local and national issues that matter to members. WI campaigns are central to this remit, and 2018 marks 100 years of WI campaigning.

Every year, WI members put forward a range of issues for national debate at the Annual Meeting, which, if passed, form the basis of the organisation's campaigning in the years ahead. The resolution process means that members play a central role in defining policy and bringing issues onto the WI's national agenda.

Since the early days, the WI has supported women's right to speak out and to create a world in which women's voices are heard equally. In 1921 a resolution urged WIs to 'educate members in the powers of the Parish, District and County Councils with a view to getting local women on all these bodies'. The WI also campaigned to remove obstacles to women serving on juries in 1921 and to bring women into UK police forces in 1922, both pioneering campaigns that WIs continued for years, until WWII brought women into the police force and the Juries Act of 1974 removed restrictions against women serving.

After a 1943 resolution was passed calling for 'equal pay for equal work', members kept up momentum for decades, lobbying the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1950s and then campaigning for equal pay in professions such as teaching.

The WI was one of the first organisations to talk about AIDS in 1986; and it called for breast cancer screening in the 1970s, which eventually resulted in the introduction of the national screening programme in 1988.

The WI has also worked hard to protect our natural world, including the 1954 resolution for a 'campaign to preserve the countryside against desecration by litter'. This led to the formation of Keep Britain Tidy, which is still campaigning for cleaner and greener places.

The current campaign focuses are equally as diverse and progressive, with matters such as loneliness, climate change, the plight of honeybees, food waste and dementia care currently on the agenda.

BWB is proud of its long association with the WI. Over the years, BWB has advised the organisation on a variety of issues, including governance, constitutional issues and structuring, contracts, fundraising, intellectual property, employment and property.