

## NFWI

### Admission of girls to membership



As a result of a number of enquiries from federations and WIs regarding the above subject, we have taken advice from a solicitor with a view to issuing guidelines on admission of girls to WIs.

The lawyers have advised that as the Constitution and Rules for Women's Institutes state that membership is open to women and the word women means females aged 18 and over, persons under the age of 18 may not be permitted to join.

We realise that some WIs have been admitting girls under the age of 18 and very much regret that they will be disappointed. However, WIs may accept younger guests/visitors to both meetings and other events and activities, provided their members are in agreement and the young visitors/guests are accompanied by a responsible adult, i.e. their mother or someone nominated as a responsible adult by the girl's family.

Please note that the NFWI Board is in consultation on the WI constitution with federations and WIs and therefore the membership will be able to debate the issue and decide whether or not girls under the age of 18 should be able to become WI members in the future.

#### **Working with children and vulnerable adults**

Currently, federations and WIs do not run their own activities with children or vulnerable adults\* and members taking part in projects only come into contact with such persons through partner organizations. The partner organizations take the lead on safeguarding and compliance with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) that is ensuring that any relevant CRB checks are done and any relevant legislative requirements are complied with. The solicitor advised that the NFWI, federations and WIs should ensure that at the start of collaboration, a simple letter is exchanged with the partner organization confirming that it has an adequate policy and procedure in place.

In the event that a federation or WI runs its own activities involving children or vulnerable adults, please contact the NFWI for an appropriate policy.

\*vulnerable adults being those aged 18 and over who receive or may need support to live in the community, or who may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people. This may be as a result of learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness (including an addiction to alcohol or drugs) or a reduction in physical or mental capacity.