



Local Organisers Handbook

It's great news that you're either thinking of becoming a new Local Organiser or that you have already agreed to take on the role.

This document is here to help you with any questions or queries you may have regarding the role and the ongoing running of a group.

As an organisation we will do everything we can to support you so please don't hesitate to get in touch with the office office@nwr.org.uk. They have a wealth of experience and will be able to put you in touch with an area Organiser (AO) or a support group near you.

What is NWR?

Our mission is to connect all women, whatever their age or personal circumstances, who are interested in everything and want to talk about anything.

To ensure a valued NWR community, our groups should be welcoming and friendly and our discussions varied, respectful and open minded. We are lively minded women so there will be lots of interesting topics to be discussed.

We are not a fundraising or campaigning charity and we do not affiliate to any religious faiths or political parties, but of course open discussion on any of these subjects can be both interesting and informative.

Please let the office office@nwr.org.uk know that you have taken on the LO role.

If you are an LO starting a new group please download the [New Groups Guide](#) which contains lots of advice on starting a new group.

If you are taking over the running of an existing group we ask that you read through the information in this guide as some parts of the role have been updated, for example, in relation to GDPR and Direct Debit payments.

Good luck and please let us know if you have any questions that have not been answered below.



Contents

THE LOCAL ORGANISER (LO) – THE ROLE	4
What tasks does the Local Organiser undertake?	4
Emails and GDPR	4
Can the Local Organiser position be shared?	4
How often should a group change its LO?	5
Who will be responsible for running the group?	5
How do I promote my group?	5
How will potential new members get in touch?	6
How should I respond to new member enquiries?	6
What should I tell potential new members about NWR?	6
THE NWR WEBSITE	8
RUNNING YOUR GROUP	8
Where should the meetings be held?	8
How often should meetings be held?	9
Does a group have to meet on the same day every month?	9
Are refreshments served at meetings?	9
What is available to groups if the government restricts indoor meetings due to the pandemic?	9
PROGRAMME PLANNING	10
How do I create a programme?	10
Can we invite speakers to the meeting?	10
How do I present a programme?	10
What makes a good programme?	11
How do I run a discussion meeting?	11
What are the most common issues arising from a discussion meeting?	12
MONEY MATTERS	12



What is the annual subscription and how is it paid?	12
When do new members start paying the annual subscription?	12
What does the annual subscription pay for?	13
Can Gift Aid be claimed for the subscriptions?	13
Is there a charge per meeting?	13
What can group funds be used for?	13
Does a group need a bank account?	14
Does a group have to have a Treasurer?	14
Can NWR raise funds for other charities?	14
WHAT IS AN AREA MEETING AND WHO ATTENDS IT?	14
HOW CAN I FIND OUT ABOUT THE SPECIAL GROUPS THAT NWR OFFERS?	15



THE LOCAL ORGANISER (LO) – THE ROLE

What tasks does the Local Organiser undertake?

This varies across groups, but the key role of the LO (Local Organiser) is to:

- co-ordinate the group's activities,
- update the group's page on the NWR website
- respond to new member enquiries,
- promote the group locally
- the group's link with the Area Organiser (if there is one), the National Organiser and the NWR Office Team.

Some LOs delegate tasks out to members of the group, eg. to the publicity officer or programme editor.

Emails and GDPR

All notifications relating to NWR business and activities will be sent to the LO so that she can keep the group informed about NWR business and forthcoming events. All LOs should either have an email address or have access to a member who will pass emails on to them.

Whilst many communications from the NWR office are sent by email to individual members it is important that the LO ensures all members without an email address are also informed of the content of the communication.

Local Organisers must:

- accept that their name, as LO for their group, will be displayed on the NWR website publicly.
- accept that their name and email address will be shared with their local group members.
- regularly check their emails (or have access to a member who can pass on emails to them) and respond to/action NWR business in a timely manner.

Can the Local Organiser position be shared?

Yes, the position can be shared and groups who have joint LOs often find that it encourages more people to volunteer when the existing LO is stepping down. Some Groups have joint organisers, some have a deputy who becomes the next LO and others are run by a small committee.



One group staggers the start dates of their LOs so that the more experienced LO can guide the new LO, another group commented that they prefer to start their terms at the same time.

Only one name should be put forward for the office communications though and that person will receive the group communications which should be shared.

LO doesn't have to be wonder woman, she doesn't have to do everything herself: she should encourage all members of the group to share the responsibilities where possible e.g. Treasurer, Publicity etc. This in turn encourages more involvement in the group and a sense of ownership of the group by its members. One LO remarked that she sees her role as a co-ordinator of others, but is always on hand to provide support should it be needed.

How often should a group change its LO?

Each group chooses its own Local Organiser and decides how often the LO should change – every one or two years is recommended.

The office should be informed of any change, by email to office@nwr.org.uk or Tel: 01603 406767.

Who will be responsible for running the group?

The Local Organiser (LO) co-ordinates the group's day-to-day activities, but ultimate responsibility for the group lies with NWR as an organisation. If you are starting a new group then it is highly likely that you will be the group's first Local Organiser (LO). NWR will provide guidelines, frameworks and support for LOs to assist them with carrying out their role. The LO is also the group's link with the Area Organiser (if there is one), the National Organiser and the office.

How do I promote my group?

The *NWR Promotion Guide* contains lots of ideas and practical advice on how to promote your group. [Access it on the website here.](#)

How will potential new members get in touch?

The NWR office receives enquiries from new members. If they have been submitted via the enquiry form on the website, both the LO and the office will receive a notification via email of the enquiry.



Often groups will choose to use promotional material which contains the contact details of main point of contact for the group. This is usually the LO or the member who has taken on responsibility for responding to new member enquiries. If you would prefer not to share your email address publicly, your group may like to consider creating a Gmail account specifically for this purpose.

How should I respond to new member enquiries?

It is advised that the LO makes contact with the potential new member to answer any questions she has, outline the benefits of membership, explain the local group setup and invite her to a meeting.

We would always recommend offering to meet any new members for a coffee, or at an alternative informal setting, before their first meeting with one or two members of the group. These members can then act as 'buddies' to the new member and perhaps offer them a lift to the first meeting or arrange for another member nearby to take her.

The NWR office can support you with handling these enquiries if you are finding them challenging to manage.

What should I tell potential new members about NWR?

Members of NWR talk about the friendships they have formed and the interesting discussions they have had - many stay a member for years. Members tend to share examples of the lively and varied group discussion topics and activities.

NWR Members benefit from:

Local

- Group membership of a locally meeting group or a group which meets virtually, usually fortnightly, during the evening or the daytime for discussions, speakers and visits.
- Opportunities to join sub-groups, examples being book groups, walking groups, lunch groups, theatre groups.
- Instant contacts when you move to a new area - who may become friends for life

Regional

- Option to link up with nearby groups for special events including speakers, outings and quizzes

National

- Day Conferences, workshops, discussion lunches
- Annual National Conference with a full programme of interesting speakers and workshops
- Bi-monthly newsletter containing news from NWR, including the schedule of online talks, activities and puzzles.
- Two editions of the NWR magazine each year
- Opportunities to join a special interest group: postal book group, correspondence magazines
- Access to our annual interactive national quiz event - the Telephone Treasure Trail

Online

- Access to online content and activities, members receive the schedule of quality talks organised by the National Organiser
- Opportunity to become a member of a group meeting virtually, usually meeting once a month: connect with members for discussion and chat.
- Access to additional content on the NWR website – including recordings of talks, past copies of magazines and newsletters, an audio version of the magazine
- Access to many and varied private Facebook forums that provide a safe, online space for discussion, ideas and support

THE NWR website

The NWR website, www.nwr.org.uk, is the main repository for everything NWR. It's a great tool for members wanting to find out about future events, connecting with other groups and promoting your own group to potential new members so it's really important that your group's individual pages are kept updated and interesting.

As LO only your name and group name will appear on the website and all contact from enquirers will go directly to the office as well as being forwarded to you.

The LO should encourage members to update their personal email address using the self-service section on the NWR website to ensure they receive all relevant communications.

The NWR website is a great source of information for LOs. Look at it to find out:

- Upcoming talks and conferences to share with your members
- Recordings of past talks that could be used as a topic for discussion
- Information about what other groups are doing
- The latest NWR news
- Handbooks and Guides

[Access instructions for updating the website here.](#)

RUNNING YOUR GROUP

Groups organise themselves in a variety of ways to suit the needs of the group as a whole.

Where should the meetings be held?

Generally, meetings are held in members' homes on a rotational basis. It's important to remember, though, that not all members are able to host meetings due to house size, seating and accessibility. Some groups hire local halls to have their meetings, the cost being covered by a local charge per member. And, actually, groups can be held anywhere that works for the members – so a quiet





pub, a private room in a café, over Zoom, in someone's barn – the possibilities are endless.

How often should meetings be held?

This can be decided once the group is established. Meetings should be held at least once a month to maintain continuity and connection. Many groups meet fortnightly with sub-groups such as Book Clubs, meeting outside of those dates.

Some groups meet in the evenings and some in the daytime, some a combination of both.

Does a group have to meet on the same day every month?

The group is free to decide whether it wants to meet on the day or rotate days. Rotating the days of the week is recommended for the main discussion meetings so that a member with a regular commitment is not excluded. However, some groups prefer to stick to the same day for simplicity.

Are refreshments served at meetings?

Tea, coffee or soft drinks with biscuits are the usual refreshments at the end of a meeting. These tend to be the signal for the formal meeting to end and informal catch-up chats to start.

What is available to groups if the government restricts indoor meetings due to the pandemic?

We encourage all groups to keep meeting via Zoom, and to remain in touch (if not already) through social media, WhatsApp groups, email or online video sessions. The office can help you set these up if required.

Actual meetings may be more difficult depending on the government advice for your location. **Please check www.gov.uk/coronavirus for the latest up to date information and details of local restrictions.**

However, many groups have held socially distanced walks, outdoor meetings and visits to local sculpture trails etc. You can also join the Open Meetings, Schedule of Talks, Online Conference and ad hoc activities set up by the National Office.

During the pandemic our group networks are even more important and will help us to help each other stay connected and lively minded.

PROGRAMME PLANNING

How do I create a programme?

Use one of your first meetings as a 'Programme Planning Meeting' to decide the topics you would like to discuss in each meeting, the time, date and frequency of your meetings, and also the length of the programme.

Before the meeting, check out what other groups are doing by looking at the [NWR website](#) for some inspiration or join the NWR Programme Planning group on Facebook.

Try to involve all members and encourage everyone to contribute to the programme in some way – leading a discussion, suggesting ideas, hosting an evening, bringing along a potential member etc. A good planning meeting with input from lots of members produces a good programme for everyone to enjoy; combining it with nibbles and wine (if you like) can work wonders!



Aim for a balance between the serious and light-hearted for discussions, speakers and social events. It is also a good idea to have one or two people responsible for co-ordinating each topic and leading the discussion. If there is no discussion leader, the Local Organiser should start the ball rolling.

Thereafter, planning meetings can be every 3, 6, 9 or 12 months with topics selected by all members who attend a planning meeting; by a committee who decide which of the group's ideas will be used; or by several planning groups, each of which is responsible for a section of the programme.

Can we invite speakers to the meeting?

Yes, speakers can be invited to the meetings and should be funded (if required) by local member contributions. A bursary is available from the NWR office to cover the costs of talks/events open to other groups. Alternatively, some groups agree to watch a recording of one of the talks put on by the National Organiser and use that as a basis for discussion.

How do I present a programme?

A clear, well presented programme with a varied content will encourage a good attendance at meetings, so it is always worth giving some thought to the layout.

Don't forget to add any social meetings if you are having them e.g. coffee morning, book club.

Don't forget to include the following information on your programme:

- The name of your group, including the county.
- The name of the Local Organiser and her phone number and email address.
- The time your meetings start.
- The date and venue of each meeting.
- Include any charge you make for tea or coffee.
- A few words about each meeting to arouse interest
- A reminder if a speaker is booked; request members' support and try to include biographical details and a brief outline of the subject the talk will cover.
- National NWR events such as Telephone Treasure Trail, talks, quizzes and conferences
- NWR's charitable status i.e. the words "Registered Charity No. 295198"
- Details of any conferences/discussion lunches in the area

And finally, don't forget to add your meetings to your group's webpage on www.nwr.org.uk .

What makes a good programme?

Firstly, make sure the topics are ones the group wants to discuss. Suggestions for topics can be found on the website at www.nwr.org.uk/events and in the Facebook group 'NWR Programme Planning'.

Discussion meetings allow members to explore different aspects of a topic and provide a real opportunity for the exchange of views. Other meetings might involve members presenting information about different aspects of a topic or recounting experiences. Choose some lighter topics where several people get involved and present part of a topic.

Why not arrange a joint meeting with another local group?

How do I run a discussion meeting?

Successful discussion meetings require a little organisation and need a discussion leader to keep the discussion on topic. The discussion leader



presents the topic to be discussed and can either ask for questions or comments to be made at the end of the presentation or she may be happy to answer as she goes along. Always encourage interaction and participation in the discussion, making sure that anyone who has something to say gets the opportunity.

The internet is a great source of research and being a little bit controversial always encourages a good discussion.

It's usually better not to have the host leading a discussion.

What are the most common issues arising from a discussion meeting?

Be aware of the quieter member who may be struggling to be heard, make sure she has the opportunity to make her point.

If your group are not meeting in person, please be aware of the specific challenges of conducting a successful discussion via Zoom. Ensure that all members have the opportunity to talk, particularly those less confident online. Perhaps you could suggest to people they raise their hand if they want to speak?

Don't be afraid to stop the discussion if too many people are talking at once or if several simultaneous discussions are developing. Try and bring the meeting back into a single conversation.

Keep an eye on the time and make sure there is enough time for a discussion after the topic has been presented. Make time for NWR business and coffee.

MONEY MATTERS

What is the annual subscription and how is it paid?

All members are encouraged to set up a Direct Debit for their annual membership fee. NWR is also happy to receive payment by bank transfer provided that the reference clearly states the member's name. Paying by individual cheques is expensive both in time and money for NWR to administer.

When do new members start paying the annual subscription?

Potential members are allowed to attend three meetings for free if they wish to before they will be expected to pay their subscription. After this they should complete an online application and their annual subscription will be payable



annually from that date. You can access the online application form here: www.nwr.org.uk/join-nwr/apply/.

What does the annual subscription pay for?

The annual subscription covers the running costs of NWR. Legal costs such as insurance, financial reporting, ensuring compliance with charity legislation are covered as well as NWR's members of staff. Staff are on hand to deal with enquiries from members and potential members, they manage the national events schedule by selecting, booking, managing and hosting the speakers appearing in the online schedule of talks, curate the website (with volunteer support) and are available to support LOs and AOs with resource packs, annual themes and publicity material to bring in new members. Staff write and issue the twice yearly NWR magazine, weekly and monthly bulletins and newsletters. The subscription fee also covers costs incurred in the running of the Trustee Board and governance of the organisation.

As well as providing insurance for meetings, being part of NWR provides groups with the publicity and support required to recruit new members, enables connections with other groups in their area and online via members-only groups on Facebook, the national conference and opportunities to take part in activities like the ever-popular Telephone Treasure Trail and quizzes.

Can Gift Aid be claimed for the subscriptions?

Yes, if a member is a UK tax payer then they are encouraged to complete a Gift Aid form at the time of paying their subscriptions. Gift Aid is a valuable contribution to the NWR funds.

Is there a charge per meeting?

A nominal charge can be made for meetings to cover the cost of refreshments paid to the host and to cover expenses the group may have e.g. speaker costs. Any excess payments should be put into a general fund or returned to the member.

What can group funds be used for?

Group funds must be used in line with NWR's charitable objectives. They can be used to pay for the provision of meeting refreshments, speakers or for subsidising group events such as celebrations or social and other events. Groups can also make contributions to members attending area and national events.



It is recommended that group funds should not exceed £100; any surplus should either be sent to the NWR office to add to general funds or used for the benefit of the group.

Group funds cannot be donated to other charities as this is against NWR's charitable objectives and a breach of charity law.

Does a group need a bank account?

Not necessarily. Some groups decide not to have a bank account and collect money only for specific events, others prefer to. If you do decide to open a bank account, please do so without using the NWR charity number. Free community bank accounts are available without requiring a charity number. Please contact the office if you have any questions.



Does a group have to have a Treasurer?

No, you don't have to have a Treasurer but it's a good idea to have someone handling the financial aspects of the group, freeing up the LO to manage her other responsibilities. The financial aspects will include collecting local meeting contributions (coffee money) and traditionally Treasurers ensured that all annual subscriptions have been paid and where applicable Gift Aid Forms completed.

The Treasurer should ensure that an account of all monies received or expended is kept and that the group funds are kept in a safe place.

Can NWR raise funds for other charities?

NWR's Articles of Association does not allow it to raise funds for, or donate funds to, any other charity.

WHAT IS AN AREA MEETING AND WHO ATTENDS IT?

An area meeting is organised by the Area Organiser (AO) and all groups in her area are invited to attend. The meetings are usually held in public places and there is a small charge to cover hire costs. Where places are limited, groups are asked to send representatives (it does not have to be the LO) who can give feedback to the group rather than the whole group attending.



HOW CAN I FIND OUT ABOUT THE SPECIAL GROUPS THAT NWR OFFERS?

Details of the special groups such as the Postal Book Group and Correspondence Magazines can be found online at www.nwr.org.uk/network/special-interests/

Many groups have set up their own sub-groups: Book Club, Walking Group, Supper & Lunch Group and Theatre Groups to name a few. Any group can organise these sub-groups depending on local demand.

And finally...

Thank you for taking on the role of Local Organiser. We hope that you find the role both enjoyable and rewarding.

