

National Federation of Women's Institutes
Education & Training
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12 December 2023

To: Federation Secretary
Federation Chairmen
Federation Treasurer

Cc: NFWI Board of Trustees
Senior Staff



Dear Federation Secretary

WI WN Ambassador Programme

On behalf of the NFWI and England Netball, I am writing to update you on changes being made to the WI Walking Netball Ambassadors network.

Background

The past couple of years have brought about considerable lifestyle changes for us all, but as life started to return to some form of normality, members around the country began to return to court with many experiencing a range of emotions in doing so; some jumped back into wiggling and giggling with great enthusiasm, whereas others were more cautious and reserved.

The introduction of the Ambassadors in 2021 was instrumental in not only supporting WI Walking Netball groups returning to court, but in championing Walking Netball within local WIs; encouraging and inspiring members to take part and have fun, as well as playing an important factor in ensuring that the programme could show resilience against the pandemic and become a strong, sustainable sport within the WI.

Current Status

As WIs have begun to actively engage with Walking Netball again, it became apparent to the NFWI and England Netball, that a national review was needed; with external funding ending, we took the opportunity to look in depth at our current progress, consider ways in which to develop the programme for the WI and to understand what lessons could be taken from the Walking Netball programme to enable us develop and enhance, future sporting initiatives within the WI. This insight provided the understanding required to strengthen the relationship between both organisations and ensure that future strategic planning, and budgetary impact was justified, sustainable and aligned with our strategic vision.

The start of the evaluation process was the survey that went out to all WI WN Hosts, federations and Ambassadors in August 2023, and the results gave us helpful insight into the current standing of Walking Netball within the WI. Thank you for helping encourage your members to contribute to this survey and we are pleased to share with you the Evaluation Report which outlines our findings (attached).

Next Steps

At the time of introduction, the WI needed the role of an Ambassador to reignite the passion for Walking Netball and the entire team of Ambassadors have been outstanding in achieving this.

The energy and enthusiasm all Ambassadors have shown to the role has been admirable and we have appreciated their valuable contributions to the role. However, as the needs of members change, it was important to ensure that the programme had the flexibility to adjust to enable us to meet new ways of working, interests and lifestyles of the membership.

We have also been transparent throughout, that the Walking Netball programme has been entirely financed by Sport England; the NFWI has complemented this by exceptionally absorbing the cost of staff time to support the partnership. Although external funding from Sport England has now finished, both organisations remain committed to working together, using current staffing and resources, to support and enable WI members to engage and remain active through Walking Netball.

From January 2024, we will be refocussing the partnership on enhancing the network of WI WN Hosts; this will enable us to concentrate on guiding and supporting WN Hosts to fulfil their roles as originally intended, embed a strong communication network within our current Hosts, and provide educational resources that will enable our Hosts to enrich their skills, both on and off the court.

Whilst we are finishing the role of an Ambassador at the end of this year, we know that our Ambassadors will continue to undertake their role as Hosts, getting other ladies playing Walking Netball, and by doing so, continuing to play a key part in inspiring fellow hosts.

This new direction will also ensure that the partnership with England Netball continues to meet the strategic objectives of the WI and will ensure that the programme remains accessible, relevant and inspiring for members now and in the future.

On behalf of the NFWI and England Netball, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all federations and members for supporting our WN Ambassadors, and ensuring that Walking Netball was able to return 'wiggling and giggling' into the WI.

With best wishes,



Pam Beedan
NFWI Education Committee Chair