



A Woman's Place is grassroots organising

We had a great year in 2018. Thanks to the hard work and support of local women, we put on a well-attended and thought-provoking public meeting on average once every 3 weeks. These meetings are vital in bringing women together to campaign for their rights.

We are therefore excited to see a growth in women successfully organising their own local meetings and we thought it might be helpful to put together a short guide for others who are thinking of doing the same.

We are also collecting accounts from women who have successfully arranged public meetings in their local areas. If you would like to send us an account to inspire, and give tips to other women, please contact us [here](#).

Arranging a meeting

A meeting can be a small gathering of local feminists or a bigger public meeting. The following advice is for putting on a public meeting.

We have split the work in to 7 broad steps which we believe are best approached chronologically.

1. Set up an organising group
2. Find speakers for your event
3. Find a venue (and possibly a back-up venue)
4. Agree a date for your meeting with speakers and the venue
5. Finalise arrangement for the meeting
6. Sell tickets and advertise the event
7. Organise on the day

Set up an organising group

Arranging a meeting is usually easier if you can share the workload with others. We have often found that where one person is taking on the bulk of the organising, they can eventually feel overwhelmed and burnt out, so it really helps if you have at least one or two friends who you can work with and who have time and capacity to help out.

You will also need a small team to help out on the day of the meeting. You might want to consider dividing up the work between you in advance, so everyone is clear about who is responsible for what.

Find speakers (and a chairperson) for your event

Consider which topics you want to cover in your event. You could have a meeting which focuses on one particular topic, or a meeting which covers a variety of topics.

Woman's Place UK meetings usually have a panel of three to four speakers along with a chairperson. You could approach local academics, local women's organisations and women who are personally affected and who want to speak out.

If there is a feminist you admire then consider asking her to speak at your event, even if she is further afield.

Woman's Place UK generally offer to pay speakers' travel costs and, if your speaker is traveling some distance, then an offer of somewhere to stay after the meeting is often greatly appreciated.

Please consider inviting someone from WPUK to come and talk about our campaign.

- A panel of 3 – 4 speakers usually feels right for a two-hour meeting
- Don't be afraid to approach feminists you admire to speak at your event
- Find someone to chair the event
- Invite us to come and speak!

Find a venue (and possibly a back-up venue)

We would advise that you visit potential venues in person. This gives you a chance to scope out venues to decide if they are suitable, and it is a chance to build relationships with the staff so that they are supportive of you and your event.

We are encouraging women to [make bookings in universities](#) and council meeting rooms.

We believe that civic institutions have a duty to provide a space for discussion on feminist issues. You could consider enlisting the help of your local MPs or councillors to support your right to hold a meeting in Local Authority venues.

Harassment of the venue

Venues which host feminist meetings are too often subjected to prolonged harassment and face repeated calls to cancel the event.

There are sometimes also protests outside venues. Venue staff are not prepared for this kind of pressure and do sometimes cancel meetings at short notice citing health & safety concerns.

For this reason, Woman's Place UK usually only release venue information to ticket-holders on the day of the meeting, and you might consider doing the same. It can also be helpful to have a back-up venue in mind.

One notable exception is our meeting in Todmorden, Yorkshire which local organisers advertised in the local gazette and on posters around the town. Local organisers were confident that they would not face the same problems that others have faced in cities and university towns and indeed the meeting was a great success with no protests or harassment of the venue.

We advise being open and up-front with venues when arranging the booking and it is often helpful to follow up this conversation by email so there is a written record that they understand the nature of the event and have agreed to host you.

We book the venue to include an hour before and an hour after the advertised meeting times.

- Visit venues in person
- Consider accessibility requirements
- Attempt bookings in university and council meeting rooms
- Build relationships with venue staff
- Make venue staff aware of the nature of the event
- Follow conversations up by email
- Consider keeping venue information confidential until the day of the meeting

Agree a date for your meeting with speakers and the venue

We have found that it helps to have at least a month to finalise arrangements for the meeting. This will also give you time to promote and sell tickets.

- Agree a date with the venue which all your speakers can make
- Allow plenty of time to finalise arrangements and promote the event

Finalise arrangements for the meeting

Think about the format of the meeting and discuss this with your speakers and chair so everyone is clear how long they will be speaking for and in which order. Woman's Place UK usually have a two-hour meeting with one hour given over to the speakers and one hour for comments and questions from the floor.

Allowing plenty of time for audience contributions makes for a really powerful meeting.

- Decide on the format of the meeting and discuss this with the speakers and the chairperson
- Look into hiring a public address system (PA), ideally with a roving mic so you can take comments from audience members
- Look into hiring security staff: this can bring peace of mind if you are worried about possible disruption to the event
- Organise a team who will help out on the day and allocate specific tasks
- Print copies of any leaflets you want to hand out at the meeting
- Organise a venue for post-meeting socialising and networking – identify a local pub or café and book a room or space if you can.

Sell tickets and promote the event

We use [Eventbrite](#) to sell tickets for our events. Include a short biography of each speaker and a short description of your event. We ask attendees to bring ID. There are other sites available to use such as [Ticket Tailor](#).

You can use these sites to send out mass emails to ticket holders giving them information about the venue location, public transport and any other information you may wish to pass on.

As well as promoting the event on social media, think about reaching out to local media outlets, local women's organisations and local political figures.

Organise on the day

Print off a couple of copies of the attendance list so you can check people in to the meeting.

Get to the venue an hour before the start time.

Set up the room in advance of the meeting, including tables, chairs, leaflets, the PA system and so on.

If there is an intimidating protest outside the venue, consider having people stand outside to welcome people to the meeting.

Other points to consider

Post-meeting networking

Holding a public meeting can be a great way to network with feminists in your local area so take advantage of this, especially if there isn't a local feminist group which meets regularly. You can send a follow-up email to ticket-holders via Eventbrite after the meeting. Attendees could be invited to a follow up event or added to a local list-serve so you can stay in touch.

General Data Protection Requirements (GDPR)

- Purchase of the ticket gives you permission to contact ticket holders via Eventbrite
- If you are setting up any local networks or external email groups, make sure you have permission to contact people
- Do not give email addresses to anyone else without their explicit permission
- Always BCC emails you send to multiple people

If you do go ahead and organise a public meeting in your local area, please

- let us know
- seek our support and advice if needed
- invite us to speak

Good luck!

2nd June 2019