

TOOLKIT FOR ACTION



USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are platforms for sharing content and interacting with an online community of people. These platforms differ from other websites or forms of media because they are based on interaction – they are generated by the people using the sites, who create their own content. Social media are used widely in work for social change to share and exchange news, ideas, opinions, and information, and to mobilise action.

Why use social media?

Social media can help to build our reach, capacity and impact when working to create change, enabling us to broadcast messages, engage directly with influencers, and network with like-minded people in ways that wouldn't otherwise be possible.

Among other things, social media platforms can be used to:

- ➔ share messages, news, and successes in real-time
- ➔ mobilise people to take part in action, and promote events
- ➔ create conversation, collaboration and connection instead of sharing information one-way
- ➔ publicise and share information among a wide audience, and shine light on new issues
- ➔ engage directly, and publicly, with people and organisations we want to influence, such as decision-makers or private companies
- ➔ create momentum around issues and actions, and demonstrate wide demand for change
- ➔ research and stay up-to-date with campaigns and issues, even if we don't post our own content
- ➔ organise projects and actions across regions and countries.



This guide outlines how social media can be used to build, and increase the impact of, projects and campaigns for change.

- ➔ It focuses on Twitter and Facebook as the two most popular social media platforms for campaigning, providing a practical introduction to both, as well as tips for using them effectively.
- ➔ The guide also shares learning and experience from Quakers and meetings who have used social media as a means of generating and supporting change.

This guide is part of a wider set of resources on creating change, which you can find at www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-action-training-and-tools/toolkit-for-action-1.



Getting started on social media

Planning your approach

Before you get started, it's a good idea to reflect as a group on why and how you want to use social media in your project.

Is your primary aim to publicise events and mobilise action, to share and learn information, to create networks with people working towards the same change, or to organise your activities? While you'll probably use social media to do more than one of these, your approach might vary depending on what's more important for your project. If you want to engage with groups working on the same issue, for example, you'll need to focus on reaching key people by posting relevant and interesting content, rather than generating lots of content to build a large following.

It's also important to remember that while the growth of social media has provided us with new tools for action, our purpose remains the same – to create real change in the world. How will your use of social media fit into the wider plan for your campaign or project? In what way will it contribute to a change happening, or increase your ability to create change?

As a group, you might want to consider the following areas:

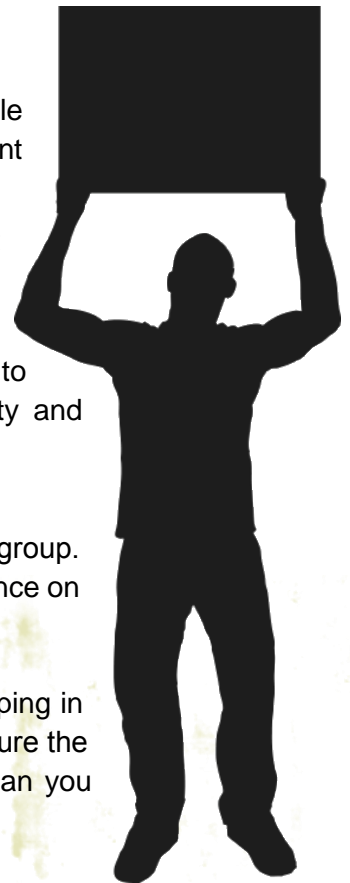
- ★ **Your message.** What do you want your social media presence to tell people about your group and what you're doing? Will you cover lots of different issues, or focus on one topic?
- ★ **Your platform.** Will you use Facebook or Twitter, or both? Which is most appropriate for your project?
- ★ **Your content.** How will the content you produce, such as the pictures you display, the images and videos you share, and the text you write, help to communicate your messages? Will it be more effective to use a chatty and informal tone, or to focus on facts and news updates?

It's also a good idea to think through any challenges or barriers you might face as a group. These could include the time and capacity needed to create and maintain a presence on social media, or levels of confidence and knowledge within the group.

Could you agree together how regularly and consistently you expect to post, keeping in mind the group's capacity? Would it be helpful to have a social media rota to ensure the responsibility is shared equally? If some feel less confident than others, how can you share knowledge and skills within the group?

Exploring what's out there

Once you've considered these questions, the best way to get started is to set up accounts for your group or project and have a look around. You can find relevant people and organisations by 'following' other accounts on Twitter, and 'liking' pages on Facebook – this will bring their updates onto your newsfeed. You can also create 'lists' on Twitter to categorise people you're following by subject matter or type of group. You might, for example, want a list of people sharing content about the arms trade or climate change, or a list of Quaker campaigns.



Consider what kinds of things people are posting – what do you find interesting, what encourages you to click on a post? What can you learn from this about the best way to write your own content?

While there are lots of different tools available on Facebook and Twitter, the most important thing for reaching a wide audience is writing engaging content.

Top tips for creating effective content

Twitter and Facebook are all about interaction. The more successful you are in engaging people, the greater your impact will be.

Some simple ways to create engaging content include:

⚙️ **Using images and videos.** These tend to be much more engaging and shareable than text, and a striking picture will often grab people's attention. On Twitter, using images and videos means you'll need to use fewer characters to make room for the photo – but it's worth it! Remember to consider people's privacy, particularly if the images you're sharing include children.

⚙️ **Posting content in real time.** Social media is often most effectively used to post updates, photos and videos of events as they happen, amplifying their impact and reach. Remember to bear this in mind when attending or organising actions and other campaign activities.

⚙️ **Being interactive.** Rather than giving people information, ask questions and encourage followers to share their opinion. Try to respond to replies and comments so that it feels more like a dialogue, but don't feel pressured to engage with everything. Avoid getting sucked into negative comments or arguments – you won't be able to reply to everything, and trying to persuade a few individuals of your opinion wastes time and energy that could be spent on reaching a wider audience.

⚙️ **Involving your followers.** Can you come up with some actions your followers can get involved with on social media, such as uploading a photo, signing a petition, or using a particular hashtag (see below) to share something?

⚙️ **Giving posts personality.** Share human stories, experience, opinions and anecdotes, as well as information.

⚙️ **Being consistent and timely.** It's generally a good idea to post something on Facebook and Twitter at least once a day to maintain engagement, but it's not essential. Avoid posting lots of things one after the other. Instead, space content out over the course of the day and vary what you're sharing. You can reach more people by posting on Facebook and Twitter at particularly



Quakers tweet as they march on the 'Stop Trident' demonstration in February 2016.



active times. Mid-afternoon tends to be the optimum time, while Fridays and weekends are optimum days for posting.

Building momentum. Use hashtags and address or tag people as much as possible on both Facebook and Twitter to create momentum and energy around issues and actions. If you're planning an action or event with other groups, coordinate your social media presence beforehand. Could you use the same hashtag or profile picture, or send content out at the same time?

In general, engaging people on social media is more about quality than quantity. Sending one well-crafted Facebook post or tweet will be more effective than generating lots of less engaging content. So take your time over writing posts, and be creative!

A closer look at Twitter

Twitter is a platform for interacting with a community of 'followers' via tweets. A tweet is simply a sentence or piece of text that allows you to create, share and reply to content, and can be a maximum of 140 characters long.

Twitter is an effective tool for:

- ➡ sharing information and news
- ➡ reporting on events and developments as they happen ('live tweeting')
- ➡ starting conversations and becoming part of a dialogue
- ➡ mobilising action
- ➡ directly and/or publicly addressing individuals and organisations.



Tweeting @ a Twitter handle and using hashtags.



Tools for tweeting

#Hashtags

A hashtag is a link that you can embed within your tweet by using the # symbol. This links your tweet to a newsfeed of content containing the same hashtag. It's like a searchable theme – people who are talking about the same thing can use a hashtag to find each other, and people can follow what's happening around a particular campaign or issue by searching for it. You can create a new hashtag or use an existing one.

To create a hashtag, simply write a short phrase beginning with the hashtag symbol (#). Keep it short and simple so it doesn't take up too much space – this will encourage others to use it.

If you decide to use an existing hashtag, try to use one of the popular hashtags for a particular issue or campaign – this will attach your tweet to a busy newsfeed, creating a sense of momentum around a topic or action. If a hashtag becomes one of the most used and searched-for at a certain time, it will appear as 'trending', allowing it to reach a wider audience.

Hashtags can also help you to reach the media, as journalists search for them when looking for stories.

Tweeting @

You can directly address a person or organisation by typing their Twitter handle (or Twitter name) after the @ symbol. You can use this to:

- ➡ encourage a like-minded person or organisation with a larger following to share your tweet, allowing you to reach a greater number of people
- ➡ publicly send a tweet to a decision-maker or organisation you are trying to influence. You can also encourage others to send a tweet at the same time, increasing pressure and demonstrating a wider demand for change.

Tweets that start with the @ symbol won't be seen everywhere on Twitter, so avoid writing @ at the beginning if you can – use a symbol, word or letter in your tweet before you address someone.

Retweeting, replying and liking

Retweeting simply means sharing someone else's tweet to amplify its reach. You can ask other people and organisations to retweet your content too.

You can also respond to a tweet by replying to or liking it, and you can encourage others to reply to engage people in conversation.

A closer look at Facebook

Facebook is a social networking site that enables its members to create online profiles or personalities, and to share content with one another.

Facebook is an effective tool for:

- ➡ sharing news, updates and images
- ➡ starting conversations and engaging followers in a dialogue
- ➡ creating an online personality or presence for a group, campaign or project
- ➡ organising and promoting actions and other events.



There are two main tools available on Facebook: pages and groups. A page allows you to create a public profile to represent your group or project online. A group facilitates communication between people interested in a particular issue, or organising around a particular project or action.

Facebook pages

A page is like a mini-website within Facebook – it tells people who you are and what you do, and allows you to post content under the name of your group or project.

One of the most useful tools available on a Facebook page is the ability to create 'events', which you can then publicise to a wide audience and invite your followers to.

Engaging followers

People follow a Facebook page by 'liking' it. The more 'likes' a page has, the wider its reach, so try to make your page as engaging as you can:

- ❁ Choose an interesting profile and cover photo, and think about how your pictures communicate who you are.
- ❁ Attach pictures and images to your posts – these tend to be much more engaging than text.
- ❁ Interact with people, rather than sharing information one way. Ask questions in your posts and encourage people to reply. Like, comment on, and share other people's posts.
- ❁ Facebook also uses hashtags to link content around a particular issue or action, so, as with Twitter, use hashtags as much as possible to attach your post to a newsfeed.
- ❁ Directly address other people and organisations by tagging them using the @ symbol followed by their Facebook name. This will notify them of your post and encourage them to engage with and share it.

You can also increase your following by inviting your Facebook friends to like the page, allowing it to reach the people in their Facebook network.



The 'Sustainable Quakers' Facebook page.



Facebook groups

A Facebook group is made up of people who have joined, or been invited into, the same community, which can be focused around a particular issue or campaign.

Groups can be public, private or secret – these settings determine who can join and who can view the group's page.

Creating a public group will allow you to share updates and information among a wide community of people who are interested in the same issue or action, as anyone can view and join the group's page. Public groups can also be used as a platform for planning open events and actions, enabling instant communication between the organisers.

Private and secret groups ensure that information is only shared among a select community of people, who can only join the group by invitation. But it's still important to think about the risks of communicating about direct action and other forms of protest on Facebook. Social media sites are not secure places for discussing things you wouldn't want anyone outside the group to find out.

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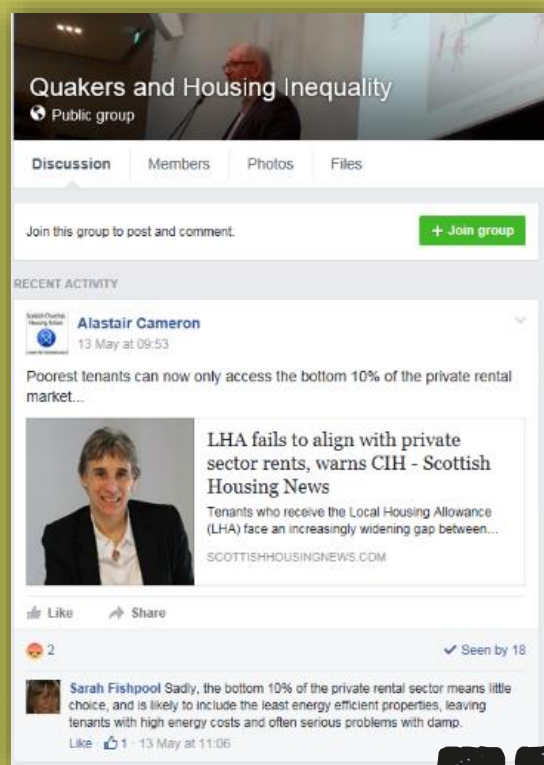
Creating a Facebook group to support Quaker work on housing inequality

London Quakers set up a conference on housing in 2016, through which we wanted to provide an avenue for engagement by Friends. We had several discussions about the best way to do this using social media. Our group included one Facebook user and one tech-savvy Friend, who created a suitable group on 'Quakers and Housing Inequality'. We thought this would be useful for Friends interested in housing, and take-up has been reasonable.

The group has also been handy for sharing the text of conference talks and the findings of the workshop groups after the conference.

There isn't much posting by those outside the core group of organisers, however, who continue to take this work forward.

Have a look at the group here:
www.bit.ly/quakers_housing_inequality.



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Britain Yearly Meeting

If you do use social media as part of your campaign or action, it can be useful to connect with Britain Yearly Meeting's social media accounts by using the @ symbol followed by their Facebook page name or Twitter handle in a post. This can help to increase the reach of your social media posts, as well as helping you to link up with similar campaigns.

Below is a list of the key accounts in Britain Yearly Meeting.

Facebook	
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain	www.facebook.com/QuakersinBritain/
Sustainable Quakers	www.facebook.com/SustainableQuakers
Quaker Life Network	www.facebook.com/QuakerLifeNetwork?fref=ts
Quaker Life Young People's Network	www.facebook.com/cypstaff?fref=ts
Twitter	
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain	www.twitter.com/BritishQuakers
Earth and Economy	www.twitter.com/EandEquaker
Peace Education	www.twitter.com/PeaceEduQuaker
Disarmament	www.twitter.com/DisarmQuaker
Paul Parker (Britain Yearly Meeting Recording Clerk)	www.twitter.com/Rcquaker
Jess Metheringham (Parliamentary Engagement Officer)	www.twitter.com/PoliticalQuaker
Mairi Campbell-Jack (Scottish Parliamentary Engagement Officer)	www.twitter.com/ScotPolQuaker

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