

General election 2024

Young Quakers



Prepare

Hello Friends and friends,

We have created this resource to help young people (and us adults) make sense of the general election this year. You can use this package to run a general election programme for young people, complete with information, activities and further resources. You could also use parts of it or adapt it as you see fit. You could share it directly with your young people and let them go wild with it. However you use it, we hope it helps make this hugely important but often confusing time a bit more manageable and hopeful!

In friendship,

Julia
(London Children and Youth Development Worker)

What does the general election have to do with Quaker youth?

Currently, young people under the age of 18 cannot vote in the general election, but their future will be hugely affected by decisions made today. We want young people from across society to feel empowered to shape their future and to help them build a strong foundation to stay involved and active in politics throughout their lives. Besides voting, there are many ways young people can take action during this general election, from taking part in hustings, discussions and campaigning to registering to vote (16+).

You can also read and share the [General election guide for Quakers](#) for more information on how Quakers are getting involved. Some parts of it are not applicable to young people, but many of the suggested actions are for all ages.

Things needed for this session

- Around two hours of time
- This pack
- General election guide for Quakers
- Some chart paper/white board/post-it notes
- Paper
- Pens, pencils, etc.

- Internet access
- Envelopes and stamps
- Glossary at the end of this pack with lots of useful definitions.

Gathering and consideration: 40 minutes

“Do not be content to accept things as they are, but keep an alert and questioning mind. Seek to discover the causes of social unrest, injustice and fear...”

Quaker faith & practice 23.01

Start in quiet worship. After a period of quiet, ask people to take turns reading out the four key issues that Quakers are focusing on in this election. These are further expanded on in the [General election guide for Quakers](#).

Democracy

Quakers in Britain are concerned that UK democracy is under threat. Laws such as the Policing Act 2022 and the Illegal Migration Act 2023 have undermined human rights. The words and behaviour of some politicians have weakened people's trust in the political system. People, and the groups who represent them, are often excluded from the decision-making process.

Climate justice

The climate crisis is a grave situation affecting us all, but it does not affect us all equally. Most wealthy people and countries have so far escaped the worst impacts of climate breakdown, while the poorest – who have done the least to cause the crisis – are hardest hit.

Peace

Quakers believe that all life is precious. We have opposed war and promoted peace since the earliest days of our faith in the 1600s. Peace is a crucial issue in this election, with the UK under pressure to respond to conflicts in Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere.



We believe people need to be taught how to transform conflict and build peace from a young age. Peace education is helping children and young people across the country to build positive relationships at different levels, from inner contentment to worldwide peace.

Migration

Migration is one of the biggest political issues of our time. Factors such as climate change and conflict are causing people to move. Many states, including the UK, are responding with militarised borders and harsher conditions for people seeking safety. Many politicians and media outlets are blaming problems on migrants that are actually failings of government, such as lack of healthcare provision.

Move into discussing these four issues and expand into other issues participants find important. Consider why each of these issues matters to you, Quakers and the wider world.

Activity: what are we calling for?

There are many issues you may care about: climate change, trans equality, healthcare, animal rights, and so on. However, what does addressing these issues look like? What actions are we calling for? How can we ask our politicians to address these issues meaningfully and practically?

As a group, pick an issue that matters to you and write it out on a large piece of paper. Underneath, explain why it matters and then discuss and record what actions could be taken to address it.

- Consider every angle: money, resources, differing opinions, existing laws, etc.
- Look at the [General election guide for Quakers](#) for examples of what actions are being called for.
- Look at the different party manifestos to see how they are planning to address issues.
 - Example: Labour will recruit 8,500 additional mental health staff to drive down waiting lists, funded by closing tax loopholes. (From Labour’s [Let’s get Britain’s future back.](#))
 - Example: The Liberal Democrats will strengthen democratic rights and participation by scrapping the voter ID

scheme and giving 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote. (From the Liberal Democrats’ [For a Fair Deal.](#))

- Look at past examples of how parliament and the government have taken action to address issues. What actions worked well? Which did not?
 - Example: In 1987 there was an international agreement to ban ozone-depleting chemicals. Scientists say these measures have averted a climate catastrophe today. (From [‘CFC ban bought us time to fight climate change, say scientists’](#) – BBC News.)
 - Example: The Housing Act 1980 (c. 51) gave council house tenants in England and Wales the right to buy their house from their local authority. It helped increase home ownership but has been criticised for massively depleting social housing stock. (From [‘A history of social housing’](#) – BBC News.)

Engaging and responding: 40 minutes

“You can change and inspire by saying what needs to be said. You have more power than you know.”

Participant at Friends Summer School 2015

Ask everyone to share a way they’ve been involved with the general election or politics in general. If they haven’t been involved before, ask them to explain why.

Commitment to action

As a group, decide on one or more actions you will commit to this general election. Work together to create a plan for how you will accomplish this. You can complete the action together or as individuals. The attached template can help with the planning process, and you can find further inspiration and information in the [General election guide for Quakers.](#)



Some ideas

- Register to vote (16+).
- Have a conversation about an issue you care about with older friends and family.
- Engage with local candidates by attending a hustings or a local MP’s surgery, or by writing a letter (see the Reflection activity: A love letter to our future (and our prospective parliamentary candidates)).
- Ask your meeting to run an all-age meeting to discuss and plan how everyone will get involved in this election.
- Get involved with Youth Parliament, school government, etc. (see Further resources at the end of this pack).

Reflection and staying hopeful: 40 minutes

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.”

Theodore Parker/Martin Luther King Junior

Often, despite our best efforts, things do not work out in the way we would like. They may unfold in ways that are downright unfair and unjust. Your local MP may vote for laws that are damaging to the environment. Parliament may pass laws that cruelly target refugees trying to escape violence and devastation. The government may further reduce spending on important public services like healthcare and schools. How can we stay hopeful when it seems there is nothing to be done to stop these terrible things?

A love letter to our future (and our prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs))

Either individually or as a group, write a love letter to our future. Write about what you are hopeful about, what you are worried about, what you will do to try to make the best possible future. You can write something straightforward with lots of facts, or something poetic that expresses your emotions. Or you can write something that combines the two. Let your creative writing spirit fly!

You could also consider sending this letter to prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs) in your area. Maybe you are thinking “I’m just one person, what will one letter do?”, but it’s important to let PPCs know what issues are important and to remind them that they are responsible for shaping our future. The more we can show that a lot of people in an area want change on an issue, the more they will be influenced to act. (Read [this blog](#) from Amnesty International.) Your voice has value, so don’t let anyone make you think otherwise.

Look up the parliamentary candidates for each of the main parties in your area and make a note of their contact details. You can post or email them a copy of your letter.

After writing your love letters to our future, come together for epilogue. After some silence, each of you can share part of your letter if you wish to do so. Then share some more silence.

Resources

Quaker resources

- [General election 2024](#) online resources from Quakers in Britain
- [General election guide for Quakers](#)
- *Journeys in the Spirit*, Issue 10, June 2010

Youth political engagement resources

- Democracy Classroom (www.democracyclassroom.com)
- UK Youth (www.ukyouth.org)
- Resources for young people – Electoral Commission (focused on young adults)
- Inspiring a world of love, happiness and understanding (www.childrensparliament.org.uk)
- British Youth Council | UK Youth Parliament (www.byc.org.uk)
- Voting – Girlguiding
- I have a voice – tackling political inequality through education and career support (www.ihaveavoice.org.uk)

Other resources

- CBBC Newsround (www.bbc.co.uk/newsround)



Glossary

General election: A general election is when people in every part of the UK choose their member of parliament (MP). That person will represent a local area (constituency) in the House of Commons for up to five years. There is a choice of several parliamentary candidates in each constituency. Most represent national political parties. The candidate who receives the most votes becomes the MP. The leader of the party with the most MPs is then invited to form a government.

Member of Parliament (MP): The UK public elects members of parliament (MPs) to represent their interests and concerns in the House of Commons. MPs consider and can propose new laws as well as raise issues that matter to you in the House. (Source: UK Parliament – [‘What do MPs do?’](#))

Prospective parliamentary candidate (PPC): This is someone who stands to become an MP in a general election. Most PPCs represent national political parties.

Political party: This is a group of people who come together to try to gain political power. They

share a set of common values and develop policies on things they want to change. After a general election, the party with the most MPs is invited to form a government. The party with the second most MPs becomes the official opposition party in parliament.

Parliament: The UK parliament has two Houses that work on behalf of UK citizens to check and challenge the work of the government, make and shape effective laws, and debate and vote on the big issues of the day. Parliament’s job is to look closely at the government’s plans and monitor the way they are running things. (Source: UK Parliament – [‘Parliament and the government’](#))

Government: The government are the people responsible for running the country. The political party that wins the most seats at a general election takes charge of the government for up to five years, until the next general election. The government is responsible for deciding how the country is run and for managing things, day to day. They set taxes, choose what to spend public money on and decide how best to deliver public services. (Source: UK Parliament – [‘Parliament and the government’](#))