

# TOOLKIT FOR ACTION

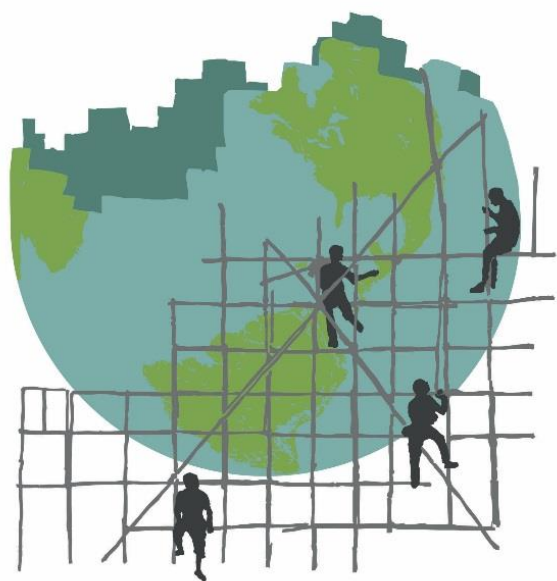
## PLANNING EFFECTIVE ACTION FOR CHANGE



There is so much in our world that needs healing and putting right, and we each respond differently to different issues. Some of us feel our strongest response when we realise the tragedy of environmental destruction or animal cruelty. Some feel their deepest hurt about an economic system that impoverishes millions, while others have a knot of fear for future generations under the threat of nuclear weapons and the business of war. Some of us are forced into action when we are directly affected by an injustice.

As Quakers, we are led by our faith in our concern for suffering, violence and injustice – by a spiritual truth that stirs deep within us. If we take heed of this leading, we are surely urged to act to change things. The next obvious question is: how do we bring about change?

This guide provides an overview of the steps involved in planning action for change. It is part of a broader Toolkit for Action, in which you can find more detailed resources to help put your plan into action ([www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-action-training-and-tools/toolkit-for-action-1](http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-action-training-and-tools/toolkit-for-action-1)). It also shares learning and experience from Quakers involved in campaigns on fossil fuel divestment and the Living Wage.



### Using this guide

To start exploring some of the questions outlined in this guide, could you get together with your group or meeting, or a group of people interested in taking action? You might want to focus on one or two sections, and explore together the questions posed. What's particularly interesting? What speaks to your group and the work you're doing? Are there steps you might like to explore further?

Try to keep a record of your discussions by taking notes on a flip chart sheet, or creating a 'mind map' of ideas.



This guide explores how we can move from the prompting to act to an effective plan for achieving change. It outlines steps and questions to help you and your group consider how you might:

- ➔ explore your concern
- ➔ identify the change you seek and how to create it
- ➔ develop a project or campaign plan
- ➔ increase your impact
- ➔ sustain energy and reflect as the project develops.



## Moving from concern to effective action

When we identify a problem – whether in our local community or national and global systems – it can be easy to jump into action without looking at the bigger picture. Perhaps we rush in because we've used the approach before, because someone else has arranged an opportunity, or because it seems comfortable to us. Yet our action for change – however big or small – is more likely to be effective when we take time to understand the problem and consider which approaches will best enable us to address it.

Why do we feel led to take action, and what is our purpose? Do we want to make a personal statement by witnessing to our own truth? Or to elicit a response from someone? To cause something to change? Do we seek to make a difference, and to whom? How will we know if it has happened?

This section outlines four stages to consider when planning our response to an issue or concern that can help us to clarify: the problem; what we seek to achieve; and how we can act effectively.

### Exploring our concern

Before getting started with an action, spend some time unpicking the problem. We can often gain more understanding when we do this with other people. Could you bring together a group of interested people, either from your meeting or local community, to explore the issue? Together, you might want to consider some of the following questions:

- ★ What's wrong with the current situation? Why is it a problem or concern? Try to be specific by using just a few words or sentences.
- ★ What are the root causes of the problem? Are they specific or part of a bigger picture? What or who is involved?
- ★ Does everyone in the group see the problem similarly, or are there differences?
- ★ Do you need to find out more about the problem? Could you consult other people who are more affected or informed than your group?

### Identifying the change you want to make

Based on your understanding of the problem, what change do you want to see? Can you articulate a group vision for what you'd like the situation to look like?

Your vision might be fairly broad, and not necessarily achievable in the short term. Can you clarify together some specific goals, or easy first steps, towards realising the vision?

These goals should be specific and realistic, and easily summarised in one or two sentences. They might be to reform something, stop something from happening, create an alternative, or persuade a local decision-maker to do something. For example, if your group's vision is a 'just food system', your goal might be to persuade five local businesses to donate waste food to local projects.

You might want to test the ideas you come up with by asking some of the following questions:

- ★ Is the goal realistic? How will you know when you've achieved it?
- ★ How will it impact others? Will it make a positive change in your community, or elsewhere? Will getting involved in the project excite, educate or empower people?



- ★ Does the goal match the group's capacity, resources, skills and enthusiasm? How many people are involved, and how much time can they commit? Do you have access to funding or other necessary resources?

## How will you create the change?

When we want to bring about change, we can choose many different approaches and types of action. So how do we decide which will be the most effective?

Developing a strategy can help us identify the steps we need to take. A strategy is simply a connected series of activities carried out over a period of time to achieve a goal<sup>1</sup>. An action or activity is strategic if you can say, 'I am doing X in order to Y'.

For example, a strategy to persuade local businesses to donate food waste might include meeting with business-owners, holding community events, writing letters, and organising creative actions.

To develop an effective approach, it's a good idea to find out what kind of context you're operating in. You could identify:

- ➡ potential supporters and partnerships, as well as the people who might oppose you
- ➡ things that have already happened in your area around the issue
- ➡ the people, organisations, or institutions you need to engage and persuade to achieve your goal.

It's important to remember that the activities you start with don't need to determine your longer-term direction. As it develops, your approach should build on energy, enthusiasm and new ideas within the group, as well as adapting when circumstances change. It's okay to experiment, get it wrong, and choose new directions.

<sup>1</sup> [www.wri-irg.org/node/23277](http://www.wri-irg.org/node/23277)

## How can you build a strategy around the information you have gathered?

It might help to focus on the following questions:

### ★ Who do you need to influence?

What will be the most effective way of influencing the people who have the power to make the change? Are they, for example, an individual or group motivated by values, a decision-maker led by the needs of the community, or a company primarily concerned about reputational risk and profit?

### ★ How can you influence them?

What kinds of activities will speak to the interests of the people you need to influence? Will it be more effective, for example, to involve lots of people in order to demonstrate wide demand for change, to engage directly with the people you need to influence, to publicise the issue through creative actions, or something else?

### ★ How will you communicate your messages?

What is it you want people to know, and who do you need to communicate it to? Take some time to develop your key messages, making sure they are easily understandable as well as exciting. What kind of language and arguments will persuade different audiences? Will it be more effective to communicate a positive vision or directly oppose something?

### ★ How can you increase pressure?

If asking for the change doesn't work, how might you increase pressure on decision-makers? Bear in mind that this might become clearer as your project develops.



## Planning

Now you have some ideas for action, outline a clear plan for carrying them out. What order do they need to happen in, and who needs to do what? Be realistic about your timeline, bearing in mind the capacity of your group and any groups you are partnering with.

At this stage, you might also want to consider how you can build the group's skills and confidence for taking action. This might include learning how to write a press release.



*Quakers joined 20,000 people on the streets of London in the run up to the general election and COP21 talks for the Time to Act climate march in 2015. Photo credit: Andrew Dey*

## Having impact

### Working collaboratively

We can often be more successful in creating change when we are collaborative. Working with a variety of groups and people in your local or wider community increases your capacity to take action, bringing new skills and experience to the project and making it a more enjoyable and creative process. It will also help you gather support, allowing you to be more persuasive to decision-makers by demonstrating a wider concern.

As we build new relationships, we open up the opportunity for new ideas and partnerships to emerge. These may take us far beyond the action we started with. Working in this way is also a vital part of Quaker outreach, with many people first coming into contact with Quakers when they get involved with action for social change.



Which local groups might be interested in working with you, and how might you involve them? Are there local groups who are affected by the issue, and if so, how could you include them? You could send out invitations by letter or email or using social media. Is there any training you would like to do as a group? Could you share some of your own skills, knowledge or expertise together through a community event, discussion evening, or open planning meeting? Also consider how you can uphold or strengthen what other groups are doing.

### Publicising and sharing success

How will you share your key messages with the groups you need to reach? How will you publicise what happens as the project develops, particularly your successes?

It's a good idea to spend as much time and energy publicising something as you did planning it. While what's happened may seem like a small thing, you are unlikely to create change if no one knows about it. Making yourselves well-known will help you to gather support and raise awareness of the issue. It will also increase pressure on decision-makers to respond and act.

So, it's important to tell as many people as you can. Some ways to do this include:

- ✿ sending a press release or letter to your local media – [www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-action-training-and-tools/toolkit-for-action-1/media-and-social-media](http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-action-training-and-tools/toolkit-for-action-1/media-and-social-media)
- ✿ informing your local MP, councillors and other decision-makers about what you're doing – [www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-action-training-and-tools/toolkit-for-action-1/engaging-elected-representatives-1](http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-action-training-and-tools/toolkit-for-action-1/engaging-elected-representatives-1)
- ✿ producing flyers and posters to share in your meeting and community
- ✿ creating an online space, such as a blog, for the project, where you can share articles, photos and updates
- ✿ using your meeting's social media, or setting-up a Twitter account or Facebook page
- ✿ writing an article or update in your meeting's newsletter
- ✿ attending relevant local events to talk to people about it
- ✿ holding an information or discussion evening
- ✿ telling QPSW about it so we can share what you're doing with other Friends. Contact Maya Williams at [mayaw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:mayaw@quaker.org.uk) or on 0207 663 1056.

### Celebrating and reflecting

Remember to stop and celebrate when you achieve something! We can often feel so focused on action that we don't take the time to do this. But it's vital for sustaining our energy that when things go well, they are recognised. Celebrating can be as simple as sharing a meal together, or making some time to socialise and have fun rather than focusing on planning.

It's also important to reflect on what's worked and what hasn't gone so well. After doing an activity, spend some time considering if it achieved the things you hoped it would. Are the right people engaged and listening to you? Do you feel you're on the right track to achieving the change you're working towards? Do you know if you've made a difference? Are there ways in which you need to adapt your approach?



## Connect, share and develop action with Quakers

- ➔ Share action you've taken, and read about what other Quakers are doing, on the Our Stories blog – [www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/our-stories](http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/our-stories).
- ➔ Sign up to receive online and paper newsletters from QPSW, which include updates on the work, opportunities for action, and news from Friends around the UK – [www.quaker.org.uk/resources/newsletters](http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources/newsletters).
- ➔ If you've got an idea for a project that will build sustainability or a more just kind of economics, you can apply for a QPSW Sustainability & New Economy Grant to help you get started – [www.quaker.org.uk/sustainabilitygrants](http://www.quaker.org.uk/sustainabilitygrants).
- ➔ If you're part of a group or are involved in a project you'd like to develop further, you can request training from Turning the Tide, a Quaker programme offering training to people taking nonviolent social action – [www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-action-training-and-tools](http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-work/social-action-training-and-tools).
- ➔ Turning the Tide also has an online resource where you can find workshop activities, group exercises and games that are useful for groups planning effective action for change. See [www.turningtide.org.uk/toolkit](http://www.turningtide.org.uk/toolkit).
- ➔ Young Quakers can get involved with *Be the Change*, a resource for taking action on issues of Quaker concern – [www.yqspace.org.uk/bethechange](http://www.yqspace.org.uk/bethechange).
- ➔ If you're planning a Quaker event, add it to the events page on the Quakers in Britain website – [www.quaker.org.uk/events](http://www.quaker.org.uk/events).
- ➔ Get in touch with Maya Williams at [mayaw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:mayaw@quaker.org.uk) or on 0207 663 1056 if you'd like support in taking action.



## Testing a concern

Testing a concern is an important process of reflection and discernment involving some challenging questions. It can involve various people and bodies, from individual Friends, to local and area meetings and Meeting for Sufferings. It can be hard to judge at what point a concern has been tested by all the appropriate bodies, and how a concern links fully to the testimonies.

- ➔ Sections 13.05 – 13.13 of *Quaker faith & practice* have clear guidance on discerning a concern step by step, and are certainly worth looking at.
- ➔ Similarly, Quakers in Britain have produced concise guidelines on how to most effectively work with Meeting for Sufferings here: [www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/working-with-meeting-for-sufferings](http://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/working-with-meeting-for-sufferings). They outline the key information required when sending a concern to Meeting for Sufferings, which bodies can send concerns and the key dates involved. They are extremely useful if you're considering engaging with Meeting for Sufferings.



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## Exploring a concern – Christine Meredith, Exeter Meeting

To engage Exeter Meeting with my concern about climate change, I co-hosted an hour-long illustrated dialogue with another Friend who had also studied the subject. At its conclusion, it was generally felt important to alert more people to this accelerating problem, and to do something. But what?

Later that week, having experienced a flash of inspiration as to what could be done, I confided in a trusted Friend who encouraged me to hold a meeting for clearness. To my delight all four Friends who took part in that meeting were very keen to press ahead with the adoption of the concern, which then went through the normal testing procedures of business meeting, area meeting and Meeting for Sufferings. A willing group of Friends helped with the task of sending out leaflets to all area meetings. A PDF of the leaflet was also made available to send out widely; it was a useful way of linking in with other organisations who were also working with this concern in their own ways.

Our learnings so far include:

- ❁ Cultivate patience no matter how urgent it may seem. Getting the concern endorsed and adopted more widely through the normal procedures seemed to move so slowly, and it was hard at times to sustain the initial impetus.
- ❁ Follow up the concern in a personal way with visits and offers of dialogue to all local meetings in the area, so as to sustain the concern and develop a deeper understanding.
- ❁ Staff from QPSW were a great source of suggestions and support, particularly with ideas for other organisations we could link with.



*Exeter Quakers. Photo credit: Christine Meredith*

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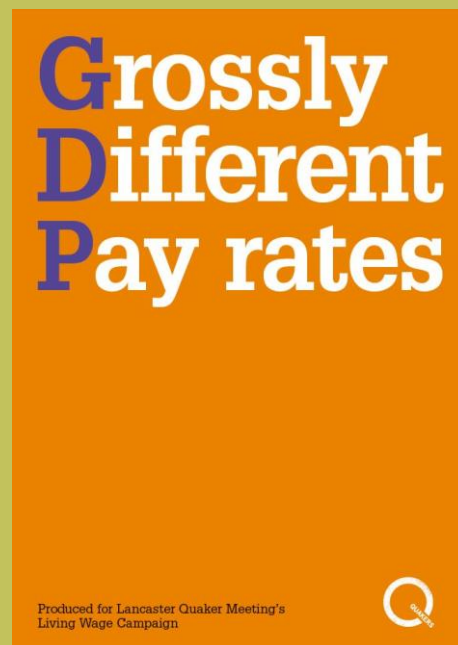
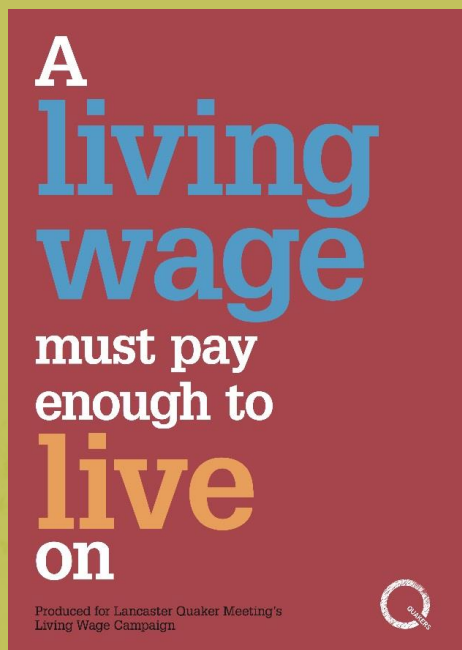
## Planning our Living Wage campaign - Lancaster Quakers

Our campaign first started when a member of our meeting returned from the Quaker conference *Food banks are not enough* feeling led to do something. After prayerful thought she decided that promoting the Living Wage would be an appropriate campaign in a society that expects people to work. Lancaster Meeting agreed and Friends joined her in planning local activities.

The initial planning was about getting as many Quaker meetings as possible to join the campaign, and to become accredited Living Wage employers. We developed campaign packs and sent them out to around 70 meetings. We also needed to involve our own trustees so that our area meeting could become accredited to give our campaign credibility.

The campaign is organic, and remains responsive to suggestions from a range of sources. Our learnings so far have led us to understand that you should:

- ➡ ensure you have credibility to run the campaign
- ➡ make alliances
- ➡ ensure those involved fully understand the issues
- ➡ leave room to respond to new ideas.



Posters designed to raise awareness of in-work poverty, widening pay differentials, and the role of the Living Wage. Photo credit: Lancaster Quaker Meeting's Living Wage Campaign.

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