PROMOTING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Quaker Peace
& Social Witness

A PRACTICAL TOOLKIT FOR FRIENDS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE 'TOOLKIT'

The effect of both inclusion and exclusion impinges upon the lives of so many people – our neighbours, our fellow citizens, ourselves – that its importance to, and impact on society cannot be over-estimated. Social exclusion is rarely the result of a single event, but generally arises from multiple causes with multiple consequences.

The Quaker concern for social inclusion arises from our belief that there is that of God in everyone. From this flows the belief that each individual should have the opportunity to develop their full potential. It is rooted in the testimonies to justice, to equality and in its broadest sense, the peace testimony.

Government policies can mitigate or exacerbate the circumstances that contribute to social exclusion. It is clear that different social policy priorities, and often different approaches to the same policies, exist between the legislative bodies in England, Scotland and Wales.

Sadly, there is too often a great gap between the good intentions of policy-makers and the practical reality experienced by those whom the policy is intended to help. Monitoring the outcomes of all social policies is beyond the resources of most of us, but we can note the objectives and goals identified in the published policies and proposals, and hold the policy-makers to account. Friends across Britain Yearly Meeting are particularly well placed to share knowledge, experience and expertise of how matters of social policy are addressed in the three regions.

This Toolkit is offered to encourage and help you to:

- question, challenge – or support – local, regional, or national policy

- use the democratic processes to convey your views

- work through other networks

- discover and compare the practices of legislative bodies other than your own

- find out whether policy makers and organisations operate 'inclusively'

- increase awareness of related issues, opening hearts and minds

- be reminded of the Quaker context for the concern

For many Friends, practical help to individuals is of more immediate value than influencing policy, but both are important: both contribute to the whole spectrum of actions required for the creation of an inclusive society. Ideally we can create positive changes in policies – and in ourselves – in order to make a society in which the causes of exclusion no longer exist.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness
Working Group on Social Inclusion Policy
October 2004

INTRODUCTION TO THIS REVISED EDITION

Quaker Peace & Social Witness's Working Group on Social Inclusion Policy worked for about 18 months in 2003-2004. Its members came from England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Europe. At the time, the public focus and that of government, was largely on 'dealing with exclusion' with a specially created Social Exclusion Unit[1].

Naturally, Friends' focus was – and is – on **inclusion**, emphasising that Quaker concern is for positive, far-reaching changes to create an inclusive society.

The Group's task was in essence to help Friends to influence policy, and to develop a definition of social inclusion to help Friends articulate Quaker goals and visions to policy-makers. The result of the work was this 'toolkit' for Friends within Britain Yearly Meeting, designed to help them (and others) test and influence the social policies introduced by the main legislative bodies.

This revision is published in the context of Friends' engagement with social and economic inequality now set within the even wider context of world sustainability, injustice and peace. It is also in the context of a Coalition Government in the UK, a newly elected Scottish National Party government in Scotland, increased devolution of powers to the Welsh Assembly, and – last but far from least – national and international economic crises.

This is a time of 'austerity': a widening gap between rich and poor, growing poverty, and cuts in public spending and state provision for its citizens.

Paula Harvey
Programme Manager
Quaker Peace & Social Witness
December 2011

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[1] The Social Exclusion Unit closed in 2006 and was transferred to the smaller Social Exclusion Taskforce based in the Cabinet Office; in 2010 the staff joined the Office for Civil Society (details on page 15)

DEFINING AN 'INCLUSIVE SOCIETY'

Social injustice leads inevitably to social exclusion: social justice leads naturally to an inclusive society. Our concern for social inclusion flows from the long-standing concern for justice and equality in society. We are, of course, not alone in this concern.

WHAT IS SOCIAL EXCLUSION?

So many people now are denied access to society's collective goods that we refer, almost casually and certainly with familiarity, to the phenomenon of 'social exclusion'. Governments have policies, even whole programmes, directed towards the relief and ultimate eradication of 'social exclusion' and the introduction of 'social inclusion' for all.

It is easy to recognise and describe the condition of being 'socially excluded'. We can all name groups of people and circumstances to illustrate it: foreign, homeless, poor, etc. 'Socially excluded' people are easy to identify: they are not like 'us'. Except, of course, that they are like us but with one or more difficulty which is so marked that it hinders, even prohibits, their access to the collective goods of society. Often, by the very nature of 'exclusion', they are visibly unacceptable and or entirely invisible: either way, easy to ignore.

In *The Spirit Level*[2], Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett quote experiments which show that the brain reacts in the same way to the pain of social inclusion as to physical pain. They note that 'social pain', part of the response to unfairness, inequality and exclusion, can sometimes trigger violence.

Social exclusion is rarely the result of a single event but arises from multiple causes, multiple consequences. There are sources of exclusion arising from the cumulative effect of interactive factors such as: state exclusion as the result of legislative, operational and/or bureaucratic decisions; by groups or whole communities who deliberately exclude other groups or individuals from society; personal exclusion by individuals who shun other individuals - often due to prejudice of some kind; and self-exclusion as a conscious choice and decision by the individual.

Whilst access to the collective goods of society – education, health care, housing, employment or other useful occupation, arts and leisure, and a minimum income – enable individuals to achieve their full potential, there are other powerful elements whose presence is vital: help, support, love, relationships, aspirations. These build confidence and create the sense of self-worth that underpin having a voice of one's own and the ability to use it effectively.

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[2] *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. Penguin. March 2009. Updated November 2010.

WHAT IS SOCIAL INCLUSION?

But social 'inclusion' is not the same as having *total* access to all that society has to offer: there will always be some limitations, some groups whose membership rules exclude me, a performance I cannot afford, problems with transport etc. Nor is it just about the quality of the services and collective goods.

Being 'socially included' is wider and more nebulous. It involves being accorded the rights, and accepting the responsibilities, carried by membership of a democratic society. It is also about making a useful contribution to that society, and having an element of control over it. 'Included' people are 'empowered' to both enjoy the benefits of society and to contribute to it.

Alongside the physical or material benefits of being 'socially included' are the intangibles of:

- dignity; respect; a sense of self-worth

- confidence; positive self-expression; participation in society; giving as well as receiving; empowerment

- independence; self-determination; freedom of choice, decision & action

And personal relationships are a key element in all of these.

Both the practical and the emotional strands can be thought of as lifelines woven together into a safety net. The more strands you have, and the stronger they are, the better the mesh will support you even if some are damaged.

Symptoms of social inclusion as of social exclusion, are seen in practical and material ways: results are measured in personal, emotional and spiritual well-being. Through the mechanism of the state and its infrastructure 'society' addresses the practical and material services, but it is through the actions of the members of society that the other elements are provided.

We, Friends generally, ourselves, as individuals are mostly not 'excluded' which gives us the particular perspective of the 'empowered'. This suggests that there is a role for Friends to extend the concept of 'inclusiveness' to enable those for whom we hold the concern to have their own voice, rather than continue solely to help alleviate the symptoms of their exclusion.

QUAKER VISION OF AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

The concern for 'social inclusion' can be seen as merely the modern version of the long-held concern for social justice expressed , for example, through the corporate Social Testimony adopted by Britain Yearly Meeting in 1997[3].

'Defining' social inclusion is about finding ways to articulate the concern as a living thing: not reducing it to a one-off form of words written down and forgotten. This led the QPSW Working Group on Social Inclusion Policy to formulate it as: '*the creation of an inclusive society*'. This idea is not unique to us, any more than the fundamental principles are exclusive to Quakers, but the Group felt it to be an accurate reflection of the concern.

Our vision of the inclusive society could be summed up as: compassionate, peaceful, open and just, where there is the freedom to belong in one's own right, not dependent upon conforming to some social common denominator.

The concept that <u>society</u> is inclusive rather than that the individual is 'socially included' shifts the emphasis from the circumstances of the individual to the nature of the society. Does society, individually and collectively, accept, embrace, make room for, *include,* all its members, seeking to help in resolving their problems and welcome their contribution? And how, as members of society, do we individually contribute to the creation of an inclusive society?

The Quaker concern for social justice would dictate an active engagement here – and there is over 350 years of Quaker witness and testing of the spiritual basis for the testimonies to justice and equality upon which to draw.

Thus, we ask ourselves:

> ❖ *How can we, Quakers, help to ensure that everyone has the strands they need to weave the safety net which will support them throughout life?*

ACTIONS: USING THIS TEXT

It can be used on its own or in conjunction with *Requirements of Social Policy* and/or the *Anthology of Quaker texts* or the questions in *Questions and Challenges*

➤ to explore the underlying issues – for yourself and with others

➤ as a way of checking your own experiences against those of other Friends

➤ to help with answering your own questions

    in study groups; as a focus for discussion

➤ when expressing the concern to policy-makers and others

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[3] *An Expression in words of Britain Yearly Meeting's corporate Social Testimony drawn from its experience and understanding at this time*. Adopted by Yearly Meeting 1997.

NINE REQUIREMENTS OF SOCIAL POLICY

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

The services a civilised society affords its citizens and others who seek its protection, are those which enable everyone, whatever their circumstances, to achieve their full potential. Broadly these services are categorised as: education, health care, housing, employment or other useful occupation, access to the arts and leisure (including sports) and a reasonable minimum income.

British society accepts as part of the responsibility of the state the maintenance of an infrastructure which provides (and/or enables the provision by others) of these services. So much so that members of this society take them for granted and regard them as available as of right.

Arguments about how these services are provided, of what quality, and at what cost to the state and the individual, do not detract from that fundamental acceptance. Sadly, access to the services is not available to everyone – being thus both a cause and a symptom of social exclusion.

It is policy which determines what services are provided, and how. 'Policy' can be used to describe: legislation (e.g. Bills/Acts of parliament); political ideology; consultation papers; regulations; implementation strategies. Here, it is used in the sense of the proposals put forward by local, regional, national or European level of government, affecting the provision of public services.

This paper outlines a number of elements which we believe should be inherent in all social policies if they are to actively contribute towards the creation of an inclusive society. Inevitably, and rightly, there is overlap between these elements.

Our Quaker faith leads us to believe that any policy promoting an inclusive society should meet certain requirements. The details of social policies will change with circumstance and conditions, but the requirements remain the same.

This paper identifies some pertinent Quaker attitudes – it does not attempt to be a definitive statement for all policies for all time. It seeks to address the way in which the state performs its role, as well as what the state does.

We want to see applied to structures in public life the principles of: truth, honesty, openness, equity, caring, compassion, peace, service, stewardship, accountability, and recognition of pluralism in our society.

In encouraging policy makers to take action to meet these principles, we must ourselves be prepared to live with the consequences.

Thus, we ask ourselves:

> ❖ *What opportunity does this provide for me to promote equality of access to all that is good in our society?*

FOUR PRINCIPLES FOR AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Individual well-being

As a religious body Quakers believe that each individual should have the opportunity to develop to their full potential. We consider that such self-realisation is one way in which the will of God is recognised and acted upon. Unless we provide the right conditions we are depriving people of the right to grow spiritually – to acknowledge the light of God within them – and to play a full role in community life.

Equality of access

Quaker belief in that of God in everyone, and everyone being of equal value in the sight of God, leads us to urge widespread adherence to the concept – and reality – of equality of access to all services for all citizens and others seeking Britain's protection.

Quakerism is itself a participative religious society with no religious establishment or hierarchy. The aim is to include all members in worship and business, and to provide equality of access throughout all Quaker activities.   We fall short, of course, but strive for improvement here and in the wider society.

Living in true community

We believe that humanity is, in a deep sense, a single religious community and that a necessary balance should be kept between the rights of individuals and community well-being. We believe that the well-being of individuals can only be pursued in relation to others; that spiritually we are one, sharing in the same God, and that the true interests of individuals are co-related and are best worked out through living in community with others.

If we live in true community then there can be no gainers or losers. We are all accountable to, and responsible for, each other. We are all hurt by the harm done to one among us. Inequitable distribution of resources does as much damage, spiritually, to the rich as to the poor.

Peace and justice in society

Quakers have a particular concern for peace and justice. We consider the two are interlinked. Truly peaceful communities can only come about when the causes of economic and social injustice are eliminated. The consequences of injustice are that those who are deprived are oppressed which can lead to anger, unrest or crime.

NINE REQUIREMENTS OF SOCIAL POLICY

1.   The policy should strive to ensure that everyone affected by it, regardless of their circumstances, has the opportunity to achieve their full potential in life.

From the principles, and from our belief that every one of us is to be valued as a child of God, flows an imperative to assist everyone to gain access to all the conditions associated with a full, responsible and fulfilling life. We seek the creation of a society which is lovingly inclusive of the individual – and the long term economic and social health of a nation depends on social justice for all. Broadly speaking, this is about an equality of treatment, not just the level of income, and about the longer term values which should be applied to policies.

The underlying issue is achieving policies that derive from the situation of the individual as a whole person. That requires re-thinking policy, abolishing boundaries, re-defining professional tasks and re-allocating resources in order to give everyone 'the opportunity to achieve their full potential in life'.

> ❖ *Does the policy ensure that everyone affected has the opportunity to achieve their full potential? If so, how? If not, why not?*

2.   The policy should ensure that everyone is able to take up the services and collective goods in society in equal measure according to their needs.

The elements creating 'inclusion' are, like those leading to 'exclusion', many, varied and cumulative, but certainly include equality of access to, for example: health service free at the point of delivery; universal primary and secondary education; social security entitlements against extreme poverty; a legal system defending the rights of individuals. These are undoubtedly flawed in execution, but they are aspirations enshrined in legislation and underpinned by international conventions on human rights. Nor do they always address the real difficulties which people can experience in taking up the services and collective goods in society. People from excluded groups may need specially targeted help to achieve their entitlement to equality of access.

> ❖ *Does the policy ensure that everyone who wishes to is able to take up the services according to their needs? If so, how? If not, why not?*

3.   The policy should be effectively implemented in order to maintain a level of services commensurate with the needs. This includes the allocation of sufficient resources, and regular performance checks.

However fair-minded the policy may be, how it is implemented will determine the actual impact on improving social conditions, and implementing a comprehensive policy nationally depends upon many variable factors. Effective delivery of services as outlined in the policy requires more than just rhetoric and expressed intent: the policy should expressly outline its mechanisms of delivery and describe its monitoring processes.

Competent levels of performance are required at every level of management and throughout all professions and staff.   This needs the efforts of different organisations at national and local levels to be fully co-ordinated. One has to recognise that human error will continue to occur at all levels, and that mechanisms for preventing, detecting and remedying omissions and mistakes are therefore particularly important.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the methods used to implement policy is an important part of the measuring how 'good' or 'bad' it is in promoting an inclusive society, but to do this ourselves is probably beyond our resources. We can however look to see whether monitoring is an integral part of the policy, and what methods of monitoring and reporting are supposed to be used to check effective implementation of the policy.

- ❖ *Is the policy effectively implemented to maintain a level of services commensurate with the needs? If so, how? If not, why not?*

- ❖ *What resources are being put into the implementation? Are they adequate? If not, why not?*

- ❖ *What mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of performance against the objectives stated by the policy?*

4.   The policy should enhance existing policies contributing to the creation of a socially inclusive society.

For policies to lead to meaningful improvements in the area of their remit they often need to dovetail effectively with other policy areas. One policy can all too easily cut across another unless care is taken to see that they are all complementary. Consideration of one policy area must, therefore, be considered in the wider context of policy implementation - unintentional exclusion arises through a lack of holistic thinking.

- ❖ *Is the policy, or its implementation, affected by existing policies in other service areas? If so, how? Is this beneficial or not?*

- ❖ *Does the policy itself enhance how other policies benefit widespread access to the services and collective goods of society? If so, how? If not, why not?*

5.   The policy should acknowledge the personal gifts, abilities and potential of every individual, regardless of other factors. It should embrace the diversity of those it affects and strive to reduce injustice, prejudice and inequality, valuing people for their intrinsic worth and not for superficial manifestations of appearance or wealth.

These values are rarely spelled out in their entirety, except in relation to policies that deal specifically with excluded groups.   Sadly, reducing 'injustice, prejudice and inequality' are not usually seen to be a fundamental requirement of government-provided services.

Professionals and members of management boards might sympathise with such aims but see them as essentially political and subordinate to the technical performance of their tasks.   This may be understandable, but colludes with the traditions of a stratified society

in which competent members of the majority elicit a better response from welfare bureaucracies than those who do not appear to conform to conventional standards. A strong lead from the centre is needed to support the mainly voluntary groups that represent the interests of hitherto excluded people.

 ❖ *Does the policy acknowledge the personal gifts, abilities and potential of every individual, regardless of other factors? If so, how? If not, why not?*

6. The policy should facilitate participation from all who wish, and value their contributions to the greater good.

Being 'included' or 'excluded' is not only about receiving the services and collective goods available in society: it is also about making a useful contribution to society, and exercising an individual's rightful influence within it. We recognise that not everyone does want to be 'included', nor to participate actively in society, but circumstances should not deny people the choice to do so and they must retain the right to opt back in if and when they wish to.

The ideal will never be fully attained, but it is important to monitor aspirations expressed and to apply the techniques being developed in community regeneration work for reaching out to those least likely to be included at present.

 ❖ *Does the policy facilitate participation from all who wish to participate, and value their contributions? If so, how? If not, why not?*

7. The consultation process for the policy should itself be inclusive, welcoming different views and providing appropriate channels so that everyone can have a voice which is audible to policy and decision makers.

A consultation process itself is often alien to many people, frequently concerned with highly technical matters, and tends to be dominated by the organised, articulate and influential. People who are 'included' have a voice which is audible to policy and decision makers and are thus able to actively participate in the economic and political arena which dictates the services society provides. Where people are able effectively to put their views across, they are not excluded. Thus the consultation process should be two-way, with continuous communication and feedback - dynamic rather than mechanistic.

The technical problems of tapping into reliably representative views of excluded groups are considerable, and few organisations have cracked this. Nevertheless, bodies representing users and survivors of services provide a focus for the views of people with personal experience of how things work, and these views can be invaluable when relayed through consultation processes. Also, the arrival of the internet has opened consultation to people with computers, but enabling hitherto excluded groups to participate requires changes in attitudes as well as improvements in technology.

 ❖ *What is the stated consultation process?*

 ❖ *Does this appear to include everyone who ought to be consulted? If so, how? If not, why not?*

8. **The policy should hold a right balance between the rights and duties of the individual, those of other members of the community, and of the community as a whole.**

There are different views on what constitutes social justice and on exactly where the balance lies between individual rights and the communal good. In evaluating any policy we need to be clear from which angle we are viewing it. The majority in a democratic society must respect the rights of minorities and secure for them equal protection under the law.

A healthy society is one in which there is a continual dynamic tension between individual and social rights and responsibilities, not the domination of either over the other. The spiritual and moral core of a good society is undermined when democratic rights and responsibilities are denied.

> ❖ *Does the policy hold a right balance between the rights and duties of individual service users, the community and society? If so, how? If not, why not?*

9. **The governing structures, administrative processes and professional cultures for delivering the services should themselves be inclusive.**

For social policies promoting inclusion to succeed, the systems and staff implementing the policies must be themselves inclusive. This must extend to structures of governance and members of management boards, to professional agencies, the composition of other staff, and companies from which services are procured. A variety of mechanisms is required to enhance inclusion, not merely incorporation of individuals into existing structures. A key feature of these measures must be going out to the settings where people are rather than inviting people in to official settings.

Effort is also required to engage with people in meaningful ways – for example by avoiding complex and jargon-ridden presentations, entering into dialogue on underlying themes, not just on technical details, and offering genuine opportunities to influence decision-making. 'User' membership of the governing bodies of service providers may be by appointment, election, or a mixture of both. Securing representation of excluded groups by either method is problematic without an element of direction, such as reserving places on the governing body for representatives of special interests.

The over-riding qualification for governance, however, is the capacity to discharge its responsibilities satisfactorily. Special training may be needed for excluded groups but is rarely available. Administrative processes should not discriminate between users of the service, but here as elsewhere people who are literate and articulate enjoy an advantage over those who are not. Some bodies and local authorities make great efforts to help ethnic minorities and disabled people achieve the same level of access as others.

> ❖ *Are the governing structures, administrative processes and the overall professional cultures for delivering services inclusive? If so, how? If not, why not?*

ACTIONS: USING 'REQUIREMENTS OF SOCIAL POLICY'

The text and questions are written deliberately in broad terms so they can be used in different ways, applied to a variety of specific policy subjects*, and over a short or long time.

You can use the text and questions

➢ as a check-list against which to evaluate local, regional, national or even European level government policy on specific subjects of your own choosing

➢ during elections to check political parties' and electoral candidates' commitment to the creation of an inclusive society

➢ as a process for responding to formal consultations on policy proposals

➢ to help other people become more aware of the underlying issues

➢ to ask appointing and governing bodies, staff and managers of public service providers (like schools or hospitals - also professional associations, trade unions, non-government organisations and other bodies which influence policy-makers) how their consultation and decision-making processes operate

➢ to check the policy, protocols, processes, even the practices, of your own organisation

➢ as a focus for discussion groups

You can use the text and questions if you are:

➢ a professional working within a particular subject and/or service

➢ already interested in a particular area of social policy

➢ responding to a specific social injustice created or exacerbated by social policy

➢ putting questions direct to policy-makers in person and/or in writing

➢ asking prospective candidates during elections about their views

➢ pursuing a specific aspect of the concern in your meeting or elsewhere

You can use the text and questions

➢ next week - next month - next year - **now!**

* If you are applying the Requirements of Social Policy to a specific policy area, it is assumed you already know something about the content of the subject, or are prepared to do some background work to become familiar with it

LEGISLATIVE BODIES FOR UK POLICIES

The UK Parliament has Members of Parliament (MPs) from areas (called constituencies) across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In addition, there is a Parliament in Scotland, a National Assembly in Wales and a National Assembly in Northern Ireland. Separate elections are held for these devolved political bodies (which have been granted powers on a regional level that the UK Parliament was responsible for) - candidates who win seats in these elections do not become MPs in the UK Parliament. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland all have different forms of devolution, which have implications for the policies and strategies they pursue.   MPs representing constituencies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are able to represent constituents on non-devolved, or 'reserved' matters, such as defence, foreign affairs, national security and employment.

Because this Toolkit is written primarily for Quakers in Britain Yearly Meeting details of the Northern Ireland Assembly are not included.

As a Member State of the European Union, UK policies are affected that political context so information about the European Parliament is included.

UK PARLIAMENT

The UK Parliament is based on a two-chamber system: the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

During an election everyone eligible to cast a vote in a constituency (the constituents) to elect one candidate to be their Member of Parliament (MP)[4] sitting in the House of Commons.

Membership of the House of Lords is currently a mixture of peers appointed for their lifetime, some hereditary peers, Anglican Archbishops and Bishops, and the Law Lords. They sit separately and are constituted on different principles, but the legislative process involves both Houses.

Parliament has three main functions:
- to examine proposals for new laws;
- scrutinise government policy and administration;
- and debate the major issues of the day.

It also controls finances (taxation) and examines European proposals.

The work of the Government is divided among Departments which specialise in a particular subject such as Health, Defence and Transport. Their number and responsibilities can be changed by the Prime Minister.

Much of the work of the House of Commons and the House of Lords takes place in committees, made up of around 10 to 50 MPs and/or Lords. These committees examine

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[4] There are currently 650 constituencies, but new proposals in 2011 may reduce this number before the next General Election.

issues in detail, from government policy and proposed new laws, to wider topics like the economy, and often contribute to the decision-making process in the House of Commons. Depending upon their purpose and remit, committees can invite submissions from a range of sources and publish the results of their work.

More information

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA
T: 020 7219 3000

House of Lords, London, SW1A 0PW
T: 020 7219 5353

www.parliament.uk for information about the work of the two Houses, their members and their committees, as well as access to contact details and publications.

Reports of debates in the House of Commons and House of Lords are published by Hansard, accessible through the www.parliament.uk website.

www.direct.gov.uk gives quick links which include local council websites for England, Scotland and Wales plus individual departments of the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

www.theyworkforyou.com provides an overview of debates, written answers, statements and committees, plus information about legislative representatives (including debates they have taken part in and how they voted), and email alert service, for all four of the UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and Northern Ireland Assembly.

The House of Commons Information Office (HCIO) provides information about the work, history and membership of the House of Commons, and produces regular publications including a weekly information bulletin.
www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/commons/hcio/
T: 020 7219 4272 / Text phone: dial 18001 followed by 020 7219 4272
E: HCinfo@parliament.uk

The House of Lords Information Office acts as a central service for answering queries from Members, staff, the press and the public. It provides impartial and factual information on the role and work of the House of Lords.
www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/lords/house-of-lords-information-office/
T: 020 7219 3107 / E: hlinfo@parliament.uk

The Office for Civil Society, part of the Cabinet Office, works across government departments to translate the Big Society agenda into practical policies, provides support to voluntary and community organisations and is responsible for delivering a number of key Big Society programmes. www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/big-society

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

The devolved government for Scotland is responsible for most of the issues of day-to-day concern to the people of Scotland, including health, education, justice, rural affairs, and transport.

The Scottish Parliament is made up of Members (MSPs) elected by both local and regional constituents. Like the UK Parliament it passes laws, debates important issues, and conducts inquiries and publishes reports.   MSPs represent their constituents on matters which are devolved to the Scottish Parliament, such as education, health, rural affairs, transport, justice and the environment. Every person in Scotland has 8 MSPs who can speak for them. One MSP works for people in a constituency, or local area. The other 7 MSPs work for people in the region, or bigger area.

Scotlands' voice in the UK Government is represented by the Secretary of State for Scotland and supporting staff in the Scotland Office. The primary role of the Scottish Secretary is to promote the devolution settlement and to act as guardian of it. He promotes partnership between the Government and the Scottish Government and between the two Parliaments.

More information

http://home.scotland.gov.uk/home for information about the government's programme, including strategic objectives and measurements for progress

Scottish Government, St. Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
T: 08457 741 741 or 0131 556 8400 / E: ceu@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

www.scottish.parliament.uk for information about the work of the Parliament and its members; contact details; and publications including the Official Report of proceedings in Parliament and its committees, and a free weekly eBulletin during parliamentary sitting weeks to inform you of forthcoming debates and events.

Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP
T: 0131 348 5000 or 0800 092 7500 / Textphone: 0800 092 7100

www.actsparl.org the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office (SCPO) was created by Scotland's churches to help them build fruitful relationships with the Scottish Parliament and Government, and with the UK Parliament and Government.

SCPO, Scottish Storytelling Centre, 43-45 High Street, Edinburgh EH1 1SR
T: 0131 558 8137 / E: info@actsparl.org

Scotland Office, Ministerial Offices, Parliamentary & Constitutional Division,
Dover House, Whitehall, London SW1A 2AU / T: 020 7270 6754

Scotland Office, Briefing Services Division, Finance and Administration Section,
1 Melville Crescent, Edinburgh EH3 7HW / T: 0131 244 9010
W: www.scotlandoffice.gov.uk

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES

The laws governing Wales are still mostly decided at Westminster with the Secretary of State for Wales and Members of Parliament (MPs) from Welsh constituencies based there. The Welsh Government is responsible for most of the day-to-day issues, for example health, education, agriculture and local government.

The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account. It does this by:
- developing and implementing policies
- setting up and directing delivery and governance in these key areas, such as local government and the NHS in Wales
- making subordinate legislation (e.g. regulations and statutory guidance), and
- proposing Welsh laws (Assembly Bills).

There are 60 elected Assembly Members (AMs). Elections to the National Assembly for Wales are held every 4 years. The Welsh Government is formed by the party - or coalition of parties - holding most seats.

Wales' voice in the UK Government is represented by the Secretary of State for Wales and supporting staff in the Wales Office. The Secretary of State is responsible for steering through Parliament legislation which concerns only Wales, ensuring the smooth working of the devolution settlement in Wales, and representing Welsh interests within the UK Government and the UK Government in Wales.

More information

Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ
T (Welsh): 0300 0604400 or 0845 010 4400 / T(English): 0300 0603300 or 0845 010 3300 / E: wag-en@mailuk.custhelp.com

www.wales.gov.uk – for information about the government's organisation, programme, publications etc.

National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1NA
T: 0845 010 5500 / E: assembly.info@wales.gov.uk/online form

www.assemblywales.org – for information about the work of the Assembly and its members, as well as access to contact details and publications

Transcripts of Plenary (Assembly) meetings are published within 24 hours of the end of the meeting. A summary of business conducted at each meeting can be found in the Votes and Proceedings section, which is published within 30 minutes of the end of each meeting. Accessible from the Welsh Assembly website.

Wales Office, Discovery House, Scott Harbour, Cardiff CF10 4PJ
T: 020 7270 0534 / E: wales.office@walesoffice.gsi.gov.uk
W: www.walesoffice.gov.uk

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The EU can only do what member states have agreed in treaties that it can do. In a limited number of fields, such as making competition rules for the European single market, the EU has exclusive powers. In other fields where the EU can act (e.g. discrimination law) it shares power with the member states, and must act in accordance with principles of (i) proportionality (the action taken should be relative to the problem), and (ii) subsidiarity (decisions should be taken at the closest level possible to those they affect).

The European Union (EU) has four main institutions:

1.   Council of Ministers: made up of ministers from the national governments of member states. Its Presidency is held by member states in rotation for six months; the European Council is the six monthly meeting of heads of state and government.

2.   European Commission: the EU's administrative and executive body. Initial proposals for legislation and policy are drafted by the 20 Commissioners who are nominated by member states and approved by the European Parliament.

3.   European Parliament: consists of elected Members (MEPs) from the Member States, who scrutinise the activities of other EU institutions, pass the annual EU budget, and shape and decide new legislation jointly with the Council of Ministers. There are currently 736 MEPs and 27 Member States.

4.   European Court of Justice: has a judge from each member state and adjudicates on all legal disputes involving community law.

In law-making the European Parliament acts jointly with the Council of Ministers. Sometimes the European Parliament is just consulted (e.g. over common foreign and security policy), but in a significant number of fields the 'co-decision' procedure applies. That is, the European Parliament can amend legislation proposed by the European Commission, and veto decisions of the Council of Ministers. It has the right to approve the Commissioners proposed by the Council and can censure the Commission itself which would then be forced to resign.

The UK is divided into twelve regions. Each region has between three and eleven MEPs and each MEP in a region represents each person living there. For example, if you live in Cambridge, all eight Eastern MEPs represent you and you can contact any or all of them. All European Union Member States submit National Action Plans (NAPs) against poverty and for social inclusion, in which they present their priorities and efforts for the coming two years.

The Scottish Government has its own Europe Division responsible for the Government's policy on EU engagement and a Scottish Government European Union Office (SGEUO) in Brussels supporting Government work on EU policy by helping officials strengthen their relationships with the EU Institutions and the UK Permanent Representation to the EU and other Member State and sub-Member State representations. Details are on the Scottish Government website.

The Welsh Assembly has a European Union (EU) Office in Brussels which represents the Welsh Assembly Government's European interests. The Officers work closely with the UK Permanent Representation (UK Rep) to the EU and maintain contact with other organisations that have an interest in EU affairs, both within Wales and beyond. Details are on the Welsh Government website.

More information

European Parliament Office (London) 2 Queen Anne's Gate , London SW1H 9AA
T: 020 7227 4300 / E: eplondon@europarl.eu.int

www.europarl.europa.eu/en the English language version of the European Parliament website, with information about the EU, the Parliament, its activities, and MEPs

European Parliament Office (Scotland) The Tun, 4 Jackson's Entry, Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8PJ
T: 0131 557 7866   /   E: epedinburgh@europarl.europa.eu

http://www.europarl.org.uk the UK Office of the European Parliament exists to raise awareness of the European Parliament and the European Union generally and to encourage people to vote in European parliamentary elections.   It provides information to the public, the media, government, regional agencies and the business community about the role and activities of the Parliament itself and the European Union more generally. Its main office is in London with a smaller office in Edinburgh which aims to help increase awareness of the EP and its activities in Scotland. The website also lists all UK MEPs.

Quaker Council for European Affairs, Square Ambiorix 50, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
T: +32 2 230 4935 / E: info@qcea.org

www.qcea.org Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) takes the Quaker voice to policy makers in Europe, keeping closely in touch with Members of the European Parliament and with the activities of the Council of Europe; offers advice to Quakers and other enquirers who need to approach European institutions;   publishes reports and studies and arranges seminars and conferences.

ACTIONS: ENGAGING WITH LEGISLATIVE BODIES

➢ find out the current definitions, statements, promises and actions from government on social inclusion

➢ write to the relevant Minister yourself (you will probably get a reply from a civil servant)

➢ ask to meet your MP, MSP, AM, and/or MEP to discuss your concerns with them

➢ write to your MP, MSP, AM and/or MEP – constituency MPs will usually reply personally to letters. The quality (as well as the quantity) of mail will shape his or her views; in writing you may be representing a significant section of the community.

(It is the responsibility of an MP etc. to respond to the views of their constituents even when they do not agree with them. You can also ask them to pass on your comments to the relevant Minister.)

➢ use information provided by Quaker Council for European Affairs about what is going on in Europe and how you can get involved; join up to their Action Alert List

ECUMENICAL NETWORKS

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND (CTBI)

CTBI is the umbrella body for all the major Christian Churches in Britain and Ireland. It liaises with ecumenical bodies in Britain and Ireland as well as ecumenical organisations at European and world levels. CTBI works with member churches to co-ordinate responses, share resources and learn from each other's experiences. Its particular remit covers things it makes sense to do in common across more than one of the nations which make up Britain and Ireland.

England, Scotland and Wales (and Ireland) each have their own structure through which the Churches can work together (see below). The same Churches which meet through these structures to consider Welsh or English concerns also meet through CTBI to consider the issues with which it deals.

Quaker links

Britain Yearly Meeting appoints a representative to the Church Representatives' Meetings and there is a Quaker representative on the Churches Commission for Racial Justice.

Michael Bartlet, QPSW Parliamentary Liaison Secretary, is a member of RADAR, an inter-denominational parliamentary group where staff from member churches meet to discuss issues of shared interest.

More information

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX
T: 0845 680 6851 / E: info@ctbi.org.uk / W: www.ctbi.org.uk

To help the churches live as Churches Together, a number of small organisations have been created to ease their way. There is one in almost every town or community to help them to work together locally, and there are others in the regions and for each of the four nations of Wales, Scotland, Ireland and England.

Churches Together in England (CTE) 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH
T: 020 7529 8131 / E: office@cte.org.uk /' W: www.cte.org.uk

Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS), Inglewood House, Alloa, Clackmannanshire, Scotland FK10 2HU
T: 01259 216980 / W: www.acts-scotland.org

Churches Together in Wales (CYTÛN) 58 Richmond Road, Cardiff, CF24 3UR
T: 02920 464375 / E: post@cytun.org.uk / W: www.cytun.org.uk

QUAKER COMMITTEE FOR CHRISTIAN AND INTERFAITH RELATIONS (QCCIR)

QCCIR is responsible for keeping Britain Yearly Meeting informed of the various movements towards co-operation within the Christian Church and opportunities for interfaith dialogue, and for responding on behalf of the yearly meeting so that Friends' views on issues of faith and order are represented to other churches and communities of faith.   (See Quaker Faith & Practice 9.13)

QCCIR, c/o Marigold Bentley, Friends House, 173-17 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ
Tel: 020 7663 1000 / E: marigoldb@quaker.org.uk / W: www.quaker.org.uk

INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK (IFN)

IFN works to build good relations between the communities of all the major faiths in Britain: Baha'i Buddhist; Christian; Hindu; Jain; Jewish; Muslim; Sikh; and Zoroastrian. It links over 100 member bodies including academic institutions and bodies concerned with multi faith education. QCCIR provides Britain Yearly Meeting's representative member.

The Inter Faith Network for the UK, 8A Lower Grosvenor Place, London SW1 0EN
T: 020 7931 7766 / E: ifnet@interfaith.org.uk / W: www.interfaith.org.uk

ACTIONS: WORKING ECUMENICALLY

➢ make contact with your local 'Churches Together' group to see how you might be able to share resources, work together, support one another

➢ use Churches Together in Britain and Ireland resources on current social issues

PRACTICALITIES

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSULTATION PROCESSES

The actual processes by which policy is formulated, developed and implemented is an area of particular importance in the light of Quaker practices and concern for an inclusive society. The kind of consultations used to develop policies will themselves influence how inclusive is the resultant policy. The accessibility of replies to government consultations gives an indication of the openness of the process.

Friends are encouraged to:
- discover what kind of consultations government uses
- actively participate in policy consultations
- pursue the use of methods to genuinely include everyone who ought to be consulted

Defining a 'good' consultation process is inevitably coloured by how people feel about the outcome, and their expectations of how much they will be able to influence the final decision. Participating in any consultation does not mean one can necessarily achieve the decision one wants.

However, if the consultation is being used as an aid to decision-making, contributions can influence the outcome. Strong, articulate response to government consultations can be effective. For example, a consultation on education undertaken in one region was perceived as being manipulated to meet the government's own ends; conversely, in the same region, proposals for changes to local pharmacies were dropped because of the strength of public opposition.

The biggest consultation exercise is through the election of politicians at local, regional, national and European level.   Political parties and individual candidates traditionally publish their vision for society in manifestos; many voluntary agencies and ecumenical bodies publish commentaries on these – as well as commenting on policy proposals during the life of a government.

DIFFERENT STYLES OF POLICY CONSULTATIONS

Consultations can vary widely in their timetable, routes, levels and formats, for example they can be:

- **short term**: with a deadline soon after publication of a document; or **long term**: over an extended period, perhaps linked to stages of development of a policy; or **continuous**: as part of a monitoring process

- **passive**: a response to preconceived ideas; or **active**: putting forward one's own suggestions

- **top-down**: government consultation is generally top-down, where policy-makers make specific proposals; or **bottom-up**: this can be where open views are sought, ideally from the people who will be affected

The purpose of the consultation can be conveyed via:

- **documents** which might be available in a variety of formats e.g. printed, electronic, audio, Braille, several languages; and/or

- **public meetings** where policy-makers or their representatives are available to answer questions and hear comments direct; and/or

- **formally constituted bodies** like Select Committees, Commissions, etc, which invite submissions in person and/or in writing
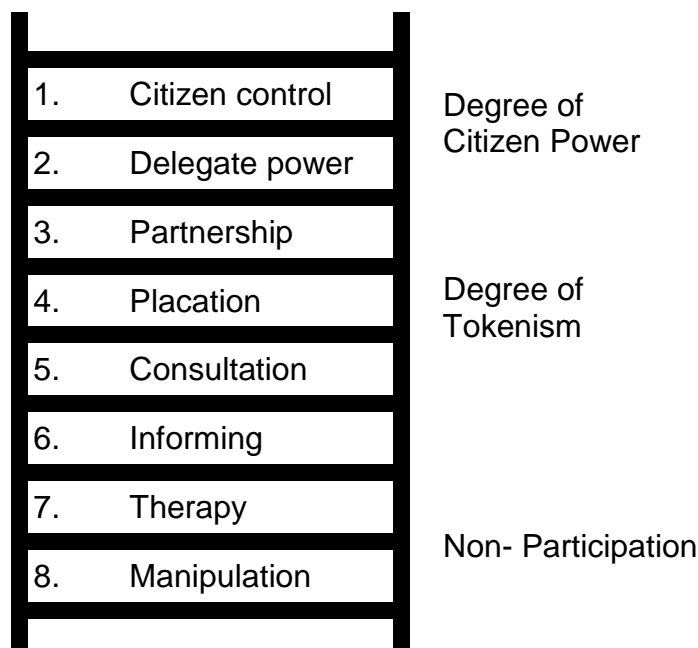
Policy consultations happen at different levels, for example:

- **national** – **regional** – **local**
- **group** – **individual**
- **service provider** – **service user**

ARNSTEIN'S LADDER OF PARTICIPATION

Sherry Arnstein, an urban planner in the US, writing in 1969 about citizen involvement in planning processes in the United States, developed a 'ladder of participation' indicating different degrees of involvement and delegation of decision-making power. The language she used was very political and implied a judgement about each level. Since she wrote the article, Sherry Arnstein has said that the ladder was meant to apply strictly to urban America; nevertheless it gives some ideas about levels of participation/inclusion in decision-making.

Ladder	Category
1. Citizen control	Degree of Citizen Power
2. Delegate power	
3. Partnership	
4. Placation	Degree of Tokenism
5. Consultation	
6. Informing	
7. Therapy	Non- Participation
8. Manipulation	

Her model is now widely used in a variety of contexts from youth participation to neighbourhood renewal, albeit with many variants. Most accept that different levels of involvement are appropriate at different times to meet the expectations of different interests.

The model can be altered to five stances:

- Information

- Consultation

- Deciding together

- Acting together

- Supporting independent community interests

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

A diagrammatic concept known as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (often represented as a pyramid) has been amended to demonstrate this by simplifying the model to four levels, showing the firm physical base which an individual needs in order to progress to spiritual growth – and to be, and feel, "included" in society.

GROWTH
giving; creativity;
fulfilment

⬆

RELATIONSHIPS
love; a role; respect;
feelings of belonging

⬆

SAFETY
an income; security;
personal space

⬆

PHYSICAL NEEDS
food; drink; shelter; warmth

MORE INFORMATION

A few more sources which might prove useful starting points for your own gathering of information.

Institute for Public Policy Research
An independent organisation which carries out research and analysis on public policy.
30-32 Southampton Street, London, WC2E 7RA
T: 020 7470 6100 / W: www.ippr.org.uk

Joseph Rowntree Foundation
One of the largest independent social policy research and development charities in the UK with a wide programme of research and development projects in housing, social care and social policy. Four page summaries of its research and development projects are published as *Findings*.
The Homestead, 40 Water End, York, North Yorkshire, YO30 6WP
T: 01904 629241 / E: info@jrf.org.uk or: publications@jrf.org.uk / W: www.jrf.org.uk

London School of Economics: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion
The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Research Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) is associated with LSE's Department of Social Policy. The core research is divided between five inter-related strands: economic exclusion and income dynamics; social welfare institutions; family change and civil society; community, area polarisation and regeneration; and exclusion and society.
LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE
T: 020 7955 6679 / E: j.dickson@lse.ac.uk / W: sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case

New Economics Foundation
The New Economics Foundation is an independent think-tank, combining research, advocacy training and practical action.
3 Jonathan Street, London, SE11 5NH
T: 020 7820 6300 / E: info@neweconomics.org / W: www.neweconomics.org

AND TWO QUAKER PUBLICATIONS

Principles for a Just Housing Policy
Britain Yearly Meeting Housing and Social Inclusion Group. 2001. Reissued by Quaker Housing Trust 2009. Free on request from Quaker Housing Trust.

The Quaker Testimonies Toolkit
QPSW Testimonies Committee. March 2003. Free on request from Quaker Peace & Social Witness.

ANTHOLOGY OF QUAKER TEXTS

This anthology brings together a selection of quotations from some familiar sources of Quaker writings. Many of the quotations may already be familiar but might perhaps be seen with the freshness which comes with a new presentation. We found they helped to reinforce our understanding of why Friends should, and do, care about an 'inclusive society', and to illuminate the path to change.

Friends are not about building walls but about taking them down.

Some members of North Northumberland Meeting, 1994
Quaker Faith & Practice[5] 10.31

We are angered by actions which have knowingly led to the polarisation of our country – into the affluent, who epitomise success according to the values of a materialistic society, and the 'have-leasts', who by the expectations of that same society are oppressed, judged, found wanting and punished.

London Yearly Meeting, 1987. Quaker Faith & Practice 23.21

We Friends take the whole of life to be sacramental because we believe in the light of God in every person. The social order is part of that life; and love must inform all our notions of justice – in Britain and throughout the world. We therefore affirm:

- that all persons are to be valued for themselves, not merely for what they contribute;

- that all persons are entitled to quality of life, and to opportunities for growth, not hampered by unjust social or economic conditions, or by inequalities caused by prejudice;

- that our responsibility as stewards requires that all resources are to be used for the good of everyone throughout the world, for the generations to come, and in harmony with the environment.

We take pleasure that these beliefs are widely shared. Too often, however, we fail to take action to bring about the social legislation necessary to realise them.

We call on Friends to accept that what we seek in social justice for all makes demands on each one of us. We are ourselves part of the present social injustice: social justice cannot be achieved at the expense of other people in the world. Change is necessary. Let us work for it.

Core Statement on Social Justice
Quaker Social Responsibility & Education, Social Justice Committee, April 1994

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[5] Quaker Faith & Practice: the book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain. 1994. 4th edition 2008.

In today's society 'equality statements' usually list forms of exclusion by naming them: race or ethnic origin, belief or religion, age, gender, sexuality, disability, social origins. We do not, because in our vision for an inclusive society they should not be causes of exclusion but diversities to be celebrated.

QPSW Working Group on Social Inclusion Policy. Concluding minute. July 2004

I believe in the powers of ordinary men and women; in their immense potentialities; in their capacity to rise higher than themselves; in their essential creativeness; in them as artists. I do not believe in the 'chosen few'; I believe in us all. I believe we were brought into this world to live and to enjoy it; to take out of it all that, in our full stature, we are able.

I believe it then falls to every person to reach that state of fecundity and richness that makes him long to put back into life something uniquely his own. I believe and glory in the uniqueness of every child and every man and woman. I believe that it is that uniqueness that above all needs to be cherished, protected, nourished and helped to grow and flower and come to fruition. Our job is to discern and to promote this uniqueness.

Robin Tanner, 1963. Quaker Faith & Practice 21.36

The opportunity of a full development, physical moral and spiritual should be assured to every member of the community, man, woman and child. The development of man's full personality should not be hampered by unjust conditions nor crushed by economic pressure. We should seek a way of living that will free us from the bondage of material things and mere conventions, that will raise no barrier between man and man, and will put no excessive burden of labour upon any by reason of our superfluous demands.

Yearly Meeting, 1918. Quaker Faith & Practice 23.16

… Oppression in the extreme appears terrible: but oppression in more refined appearances remains to be oppression; and where the smallest degree of it is cherished it grows stronger and more extensive. To labour for a perfect redemption from this spirit of oppression is the great business of the whole family of Christ Jesus in this world.

John Woolman, 1763. Quaker Faith & Practice 23.14

We value that of God in each person, and affirm the right of everyone to contribute to society and share in life's good things, beyond the basic necessities. … We commit ourselves to learning again the spiritual value of each other. We find ourselves utterly at odds with the priorities in our society which deny the full human potential of millions of people in this country. That denial diminishes us all. There must be no 'them' and 'us'.

London Yearly Meeting, 1987. Quaker Faith & Practice 23.21

The Religious Society of Friends is organised into local meetings, each of which should be a community.

Quaker Faith & Practice 10.03

People matter. In the end human rights are about people being treated and feeling like people who matter. We are reminded graphically of violations of human rights far away and near at hand. In ignorance or knowingly we all violate human rights. We are all involved in the exercise of power and the abuse of power.

The multitude and complexity of the problems of oppression and injustice often seems to overwhelm us. We can do something. … Above all we must take risks for God: look around us to the people who need help; listen to those who experience oppression; engage in the mutual process of liberation.

London Yearly Meeting 1986. Quaker Faith & Practice 24.49

Equality and Community: The Quaker testimony to equality stems from the conviction that all people are of equal spiritual worth. This was reflected in the early days of Quakerism by the equal spiritual authority of women, and by the refusal to use forms of address that recognised social distinctions. Equality is also a fundamental characteristic of Quaker organisation and worship, with the lack of clergy and any formal hierarchy.

This belief in equality and sharing is in conflict with the spirit of a materialistic and individualistic age. Where the sense of mutual obligation is weakened, this quickly leads to despair, crime and alienation. The testimony to equality is concerned with the way in which our own life-styles and behaviour increase inequalities. It covers such matters as social inclusion, ethical investment, seeking to ensure that those who produce goods (especially in poor countries) receive fair payment, the avoidance of exploitation and discrimination, work with the homeless, asylum-seekers, refugees and prisoners, and prison reform. It is also a testimony of particular relevance in a multicultural and increasingly complex society in which there is an acute need for racial justice and for empathy between all faiths.

The Quaker Testimonies QPSW Testimonies Committee. March 2003

Power is the ability to define reality for others. This power is experienced through the language society uses, through the legal and political systems, in the way it conveys standards of ethics, through the way in which it orders its priorities. Society is all of us and most of us consciously or unconsciously accept the dominant values.

If in small ways we are unconventional, no matter, the system can accept that, it is when we really challenge the fundamental values around us that the problem arises. Minorities simply by existing and demanding equality are a threat. ….

Social norms and common values are of course necessary for the survival of any group. What is important, however, is that these values affirm all its members. If survival of the community is based upon the oppression of some of its members, then we have to question this type of survival in the name of a more universal liberation.

A Minority of One. Harvey Gillman, Swarthmore Lecture 1988

… The belief in the equality of all human beings of whatever sex, race, class or age. This is firmly grounded in God's love for each individual, rather than in social fashion. This requires policies, not of equal opportunities (which redistribute inequality) but of equality, and implies that schools should be reorganised for co-operation rather than competition, and for affirming people in their successes rather than their failures.

Janet Scott, 1988. Quaker Faith & Practice 23.73

We have thought and felt deeply about the disgrace that there is poverty in our country. So long as any one person in our midst can say 'I exist, but I'm nothing' the longing for a more just social order will persist. The truth is that we are all hurt and need healing. There is a spiritual poverty among both rich and poor. … If we are to be whole, we can no longer ignore the divisions created by idolising wealth, success and power. A key to a deep-rooted response to poverty is to throw away the illusion that the rich alone have much to offer and to grasp the reality that we all have much to gain from one another.

London Yearly Meeting, 1987

Fellowship in the life eternal brings a sensitiveness to all wrong and oppression and a desire to identify ourselves with our fellows and to take our share of the burden of the world's suffering. How hard it is to put ourselves in other men's shoes!

During our Yearly Meeting we have tried to realise something of what it means to be a refugee, an unemployed man, a prisoner, a juvenile offender. We have had brought before us the privations of the underpaid and underfed at home and abroad, the disabilities laid on people of other colour and race, the failure of men to distribute equitably the abundant produce that the earth can supply.

As followers of Jesus we are called to strive to remedy these injustices, not clinging to exclusive privileges for ourselves or for our nation, but remembering that the earth is the Lord's and that the fullness of it should be used for the well-being of all his children.

Yearly Meeting, 1938

Many of us live in the more prosperous areas of large cities, or within commuting distance of them. The accumulated decisions we make, together with the accumulated decisions of all our neighbours, help to determine what life is like for the people who live in the inner areas of those cities, and in the large isolated housing estates on their edges. Decisions about where to live, what forms of transport to use, where to spend money, where to send children to school, where to work, whom to employ, where to obtain health services, what to condone, what to protest about, business decisions, personal decisions, political decisions - all these have an effect. Our first and greatest responsibility is to make those decisions in the knowledge of their effect on others.

Nationally we have to face up to the fact that deprived areas are distinguished as much by personal as by collective poverty, and that the only way to tackle personal poverty is to let people have more money. More money for some inevitably means less for others. Are we willing to press for this?

Martin Wyatt, 1986. Quaker Faith & Practice 23.49

Compassion to be effective requires detailed knowledge and understanding of how society works. Any social system in turn requires men and women in it of imagination and goodwill. What would be fatal would be for those with exceptional human insight and concern to concentrate on ministering to individuals, whilst those accepting responsibility for the design and management of organisations were left to become technocrats. What is important is that institutions and their administration be constantly tested against human values, and that those who are concerned about these values be prepared to grapple with the complex realities of modern society as it is.

Grigor McClelland, 1976. Quaker Faith & Practice 23.47

I have been greatly exercised for some time by the image we like to present of ourselves (albeit with beating of breasts) as a white, middle-class, well-educated group of heterosexual people, preferably in stable marriages with children that behave in social acceptable ways. I do feel that this is a myth. The danger of such myths is that we exclude many potential Quakers who feel they cannot/do not live up to the image or who feel that such a group is not one with which they wish to be associated. Sadly, many of us within the Society who do not fit in feel marginalised and second-class.

Another effect is that many problems faced by a large proportion of people are seen as separate: people who are poor, facing oppression, living in poor housing, experiencing prejudice are the 'others'. This enables us to be very caring but distant (and sometimes patronising) and also makes it difficult to be conscious of prejudice behind some of the normally accepted assumptions of our society/Society, such as that people who are unemployed are a different group from those who have employment; that poor people are poor … because they are not as bright or as able as the rest of us or because their limited homes did not give them the opportunities that a good Quaker home would have done; that children living in single-parent families are automatically deprived by that very fact.

Until we as a Religious Society begin to question our assumptions, until we look at the prejudices, often very deeply hidden, within our own Society, how are we going to be able to confront the inequalities within the wider society? We are very good at feeling bad about injustice, we put a lot of energy into sticking-plaster activity (which obviously has to be done), but we are not having any effect in challenging the causes of inequality and oppression. I do sometimes wonder if this is because we are not able to do this within and among ourselves.

Susan Rooke-Matthews, 1993. Quaker Faith & Practice 23.46

We are all responsible for the society in which we live. We cannot dismiss the casualties of the system by saying they have brought it all on themselves. It is our belief that there is that of God in everyone. In those who create the hurt and those who are hurt. In different ways and degrees we are all both. This may be denied by society and, indeed, by the individual. But we cannot join in the wide-spread 'writing off' of people, without denying our central testimony to and experience of the potential of love to transform even violence and hatred. It is therefore our spiritual responsibility to examine the nature of society: how far does it encourage the great Christian virtues of self-less love, simplicity, peacefulness, truth and a sense of the equality of all as children of God which is the foundation of true community?

We recognise that our testimonies stand against many of the current strands of economic, social and political change. We are, therefore, clear that we have to dissent

from fundamental aspects of the contemporary social order. This will mean developing our experience of living out our testimonies against the ways of the world, while holding up an alternative vision of human fulfilment.

 One way of doing so is to share with one another our practice of living in accordance with testimony much more openly and adventurously, in the expectation of being led into more faithful discipleship. We are also clear that we have to seek, both individually and corporately, locally and nationally to express our alternative vision in ways which contribution positively to political decision making.

Such political expressions of our faith will not stem from a party spirit but will express our understanding of God's leadings. We acknowledge that we do not have all the answers. We aim not for a facile dissent but to encourage a return to fundamental values despite the difficult realities of day-to-day politics. We welcome the fact that our voices are amongst many which share fundamental values.

Together we need to dedicate ourselves to keeping alive an alternative vision of a society centred on meeting real human needs rather than ever changing desires; a society where inequalities of wealth and power are small enough for there to be real equality of esteem; a society which, mindful of the quality of life and the needs of future generations, limits is use of natural resources to what is sustainable; a society which is content with sufficiency rather than hankering after excess; a society in which justice is an active basis for social peace and community.

In all that we say and do we intend to hold firm to our core testimony to the sacramental nature of each aspect of our lives in so far as we sense it in God's loving purpose. So, in the crucial economic and political areas of our common life we must practise spiritual discernment. And then act.

Extracts from An expression in words of Britain Yearly Meeting's Corporate Social Testimony drawn from its experience and understanding at this time. 1997

ACTIONS: USING THESE TEXTS

They can be used in conjunction with Requirements of Social Policy and/or Defining an 'Inclusive society' or the questions in Questions and Challenges

➢   to explore the underlying issues – for yourself and with others

➢   as a way of checking your own experiences against those of other Friends

➢   to help with answering your own questions

      in study groups; as a focus for discussion

➢   when expressing the concern to policy-makers and others

ASKING QUESTIONS, GATHERING INFORMATION

Some of these are questions to help in finding out about policies and then to test whether or not they will promote an inclusive society; others are offered in the spirit of *Advices and Queries* to help us consider how, as Quakers, individually and together, we can change the way things are.

GATHERING INFORMATION

Asking questions

Before looking at any policy in detail, it is important to find out three key things about it:

1)   The purpose of it, and the goals set for it : what is the legislative body's stated intention in introducing this policy?

2)   How it is being formulated, tested and implemented: what bureaucratic and/or legislative mechanisms are being used? For example, a consultation paper followed by legislation followed by regulation and code of practice.

3)   Whether any kind of monitoring and evaluation of achievement of the stated goals is incorporated in the policy: if so, what is it and how can you obtain the results?

Using questions from 'Requirements of Social Policy' (and elsewhere) …

- Asking the questions can draw to the attention of policy-makes the elements of a Quaker vision for an inclusive society.

- Getting answers to the questions should enable you to make informed representation to policy-makers when you are trying to change (or support) their proposals.

- Finding out why it is not possible to get an answer to any question can illustrate flaws in the policy and/or the openness of the processes used to formulate, consult upon, or implement the policy.

- The questions can be put to the people responsible for implementing the policy and those who formulate it.

- The questions can be adapted to be put to people standing for election to serve on public bodies as well as during government elections.

Steps and 'signposts' for gathering information

For contact details and major publications relating to local councils/authorities and regional assemblies use local libraries, government offices, community centres, etc and websites on the internet.

Most government departments and sources of information can be contacted by telephone, fax, letter or email. Contacts for the UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, Northern Ireland Assembly and European Parliament are in the *Legislative Bodies* section.

If you have access to the internet you will find that searching websites yields a great deal of detailed and (usually) up-to-date information. This is done fairly easily by using the 'publications' pages and keywords within any website.

- Identify the government department/s responsible for overseeing the specific policy subject. There may be more than one department involved either directly because of explicit inter-departmental co-operation, or implicitly through structural relationships.

- Find key policy statements and strategies and discover what they have to say about the specific policy subject. Get a copy direct from the relevant department. There may be more than one document involved so it is worth checking to see what else has been published and/or is being produced which affects the area of your interest.

- To see the government's broad context for the specific policy, it is worth looking at their key documents about social exclusion or inclusion.   There may be several of these because of the overlapping nature of different areas of social policies.

- Identify other relevant bodies such as research bodies, voluntary organisations and churches who are likely to have produced publications on the subject. It is helpful to have a general idea of what kinds of things are published by the most accessible of these, such as the ecumenical network and major regional non-government organisations (NGOs). Most will have regular publication lists, reports or newsletters you can receive, as well as information on their websites. Each new source tends to lead to others.

- Having traced a significant number of strategies in a cross-section of policy areas, plus some policy papers on social inclusion, skim through them and perhaps add a few more source documents mentioned, to be added to the store of "raw material".

- Find out the timetable for the various different stages of consultation, adoption and implementation. Government information sources will give details for any relevant All-Party Parliamentary Groups and reports of debates in the legislature.

- Using the information and comments obtained from various sources, write direct to the relevant government Minister//local councillor etc with questions, comments and/or suggestions for improvements to the proposed policy.   Writing to a Minister/ will usually elicit a reply from a civil servant.   You can also write to your legislative representative asking them to raise the issue with the Minister responsible. The Minister will usually respond personally via your representative.

- Keep following up clues! For example, it is worth watching the media for news items: they can often prompt a search of other sources for the full story, or even supply the sources for you to follow up.

Freedom of Information Act

This gives you the right to ask any public body for all the information it has on any subject you choose. There are no restrictions on your age, nationality or where you live. You can ask for any information at all, but some might be withheld to protect various interests. If this is the case, the public body must tell you why the information has been withheld. Scotland has its own Freedom of Information Act, which is very similar to the England, Wales and Northern Ireland Act.

The Act applies to public bodies including:

- government departments and local assemblies

- local authorities and councils

- health trusts, hospitals and doctors' surgeries

- schools, colleges and universities

- publicly funded museums

- the police

- non-departmental public bodies, committees and advisory bodies

The websites for the individual legislative bodies will provide guidance on doing this, as does the website for DirectGov.

QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR OURSELVES

These questions are offered to help readers think more deeply about what we really mean by 'promoting an inclusive society', and why it matters. By doing this, as individuals and in groups, we should feel able to speak out more confidently against injustice – and to see
what changes we need to make in ourselves and our lives, and as challenges for all of us to take up as and when we can.

The questions can be used on their own in discussion groups, as a starting point for private meditation and prayer, or in conjunction with other papers in this Tool Kit particularly *Requirements of Social Policy*, *Defining an inclusive society* and the *Anthology of Quaker Texts*.

To create change, to build an inclusive society, the starting point is, as always, ourselves. How does it **feel** to be 'included' or 'excluded'? How do we have to change **ourselves** to become more open and receptive to others? How can we change our **society** to make it actively inclusive?

Questions about personal attitudes and actions

1. Do I foster the spirit of mutual understanding and forgiveness which our discipleship asks of us? Remember that each of us is unique, precious, a child of God.

2. Do I feel that kinship with other human beings which compels to urgent action?

3. Do I consider the stress caused by being excluded from society?

4. Does my rejoicing in the things I have give me strength to work towards a better life for all?

5. Am I alert to practices here and throughout the world which discriminate against people on the basis of who or what they are or because of their beliefs?

6. Do I bear witness to the humanity of all people, including those who break society's conventions or its laws?

7. Am I working to bring about a just and compassionate society which allows everyone to develop their capacities and fosters the desire to serve?

8. Am I willing to use my personal power to challenge behaviours which are oppressive and discriminatory?

9. Do I accept that my knowledge and perceptions are relevant to my life experience? And that others' are equally valid?

10. What judgements do I make about other people's beliefs, lifestyles, behaviour and values?

11. Do I value the ways in which others are different from me?

12. Do I engage in active encounters with people who are excluded, to learn from them and from their experience of insecurity?

13. Do I ever articulate my support for, or disapproval of, the decisions taken by policy makers providing local services?

14. Do I actively help to promote the provision of community services to enable individuals to have greater access to them?

15. Do I pose questions to policy and decision makers about how their policies and decisions affect people who find it difficult to benefit from the collective goods of society?

Questions on social inclusion

The first three questions here are about trying to identify the positive state of feeling, being, 'included' within one's own experience of 'society', so that we can recognise and thus promote the ingredients. The remaining two questions focus on what actions are needed to translate that feeling into the reality of an inclusive society.

You might like to try using the questions as the focus for group discussion: Q 1 – think silently about this for yourself; Q 2 & 3 – turn to a neighbour and discuss your answers to these two; Q 4 & 5 – share your answers with the whole group.

1. How have I been empowered?

2. How have I experienced social inclusion or exclusion?

3. When do I feel included?

4. Social inclusion will come when I ….. do what?

5. Social inclusion will grow in society when ….. what happens?

Questions about working with, not just for, other people

Those of us who are 'socially included' or 'empowered' are exercising freedom of choice, self-determination, positive expression of self-worth, and participation in society. We have positive expectations, which are usually met, and the security to be accepting or dismissive of other people. It is difficult to avoid using this 'power' to do things 'for' or even 'to' people we are seeking to help. Underlying our actions should be the desire to share our own empowerment with those who are presently denied it.

How can we find ways to 'work with not just for people in need'? That is, to extend the concept of inclusiveness to enable those for whom we hold the concern to have their own voice? It is a fine line between '*with'* and *'for'* - both of which are valuable and necessary responses. These questions merely offer some ways of looking at the difference.

1. How can we, in a position to offer help to people in difficulties, assist those people in expressing and achieving their own solutions themselves?

2. How does what I offer support others to achieve the same freedom and power in their life as I have in mine?

3. What help do people say they want from me?

4. How can we, together, identify the real problem and thus find a real solution?

5. How far is the recipient of my help an active participant in achieving the solution?

6. Am I truly working in partnership with the person I wish to help?

7. Do I recognise, and accept, when my help is no longer needed?

We need to arrive at a place in which we all take personal responsibility to make whatever changes we are called to. At the same time, we need to pledge ourselves to corporate action. The environmental crisis is enmeshed with global economic injustice and we must face our responsibility as one of the nations which has unfairly benefited at others' expense, to redress inequalities which, in William Penn's words, are 'wretched and blasphemous' (*Quaker Faith & Practice* 25.13).

Yearly Meeting 2011 Minute 36: As led (Gathering up the threads)

More copies of this Toolkit are available, free on request, from:
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