

A Quaker vision for build back better

Quakers in Britain briefing for MPs and Peers, July 2020



[Quakers](#) are a faith community working for equality, peace, truth, simplicity and sustainability. We try to find God in ourselves and those around us.

We believe Quakers and other faith communities have an important role in helping society to recover from the pandemic. Our vision for how we 'build back better' is grounded in our faith, and supported by centuries of experience putting our beliefs into action. We focus on four interlinked areas.

1. A fairer, greener economy

The recovery from COVID-19 presents an opportunity to create a new economy. But there is also a risk that we will rebuild our economy in a way that locks us into high-carbon mechanisms. We must avoid this to protect people and planet. As a member of the [Build Back Better](#) campaign, we call on the government to decarbonise the economy in a way that tackles inequality and enhances the lives of ordinary people and communities.

We welcome commitments to a net-zero carbon economy. But the UK government must go much further and faster. The need for a rapid and just transition to net zero must be at the heart of all spending decisions. This includes ending all [public financing of, and tax breaks for, fossil fuel projects](#).

Many more people who were already living in poverty are now struggling with the financial impacts of COVID-19. People from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds have been disproportionately affected. It is vital that policies introduced to address the climate crisis are fair, and are seen to be fair. We believe the time has come to explore options for taxing wealth more effectively.

2. A peaceful world

Peace is a core Quaker value. Over hundreds of years, Quakers have practised and promoted nonviolent approaches to resolving conflict.

The links between health, environment and peace have become clearer during the pandemic. As part of [Rethinking Security](#), we call for security based on justice, cooperation and sustainability. To provide holistic, human security, we believe the government must stop investing in arms and fossil fuels, and invest more in renewables and public services.

COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement provide an opportunity to reflect critically on our education system and the values it instils. [Peace education](#), with its emphasis on relationships and critical thinking, can be part of the rebuilding process.

3. A humane immigration and asylum system

Quakers have long offered [sanctuary](#) to people forced to flee their homes. Policies such as 'no recourse to public funds', 'right to rent', and the ban on asylum-seekers doing paid work, force people from migrant backgrounds into poverty. They exacerbate racism by creating mistrust of people perceived as not being British, and by reinforcing the false view that migrants do not contribute to society. The pandemic caused many people from migrant backgrounds to fall deeper into destitution.

The government took action to address this, such as releasing some people from detention and granting free treatment for COVID-19. The recovery is an opportunity to improve our immigration system further.

Quakers call for the government to end the hostile environment and allow people from migrant backgrounds to access work, housing and healthcare. We would like to see those released from detention remain at liberty, and an end to the use of Immigration Removal Centres. This would restore dignity to people from migrant backgrounds and enable them to contribute fully to our economy and society.

4. A transformative justice system

Courts and prisons have been an important issue during the COVID-19 crisis. Quakers in Britain welcomed the government's early release scheme, but were disappointed that this affected [less than a hundred people](#). Enforcing restrictive regimes in prisons helped combat the spread of the virus but reduced people's prospects for rehabilitation, so it was harmful to them and society in the longer term.

The government could extend the early release scheme introduced during the pandemic. We also believe it is vital that the UK government adopt the [presumption against short sentences](#) that is working well in Scotland. The government must do more to address racial inequality in the criminal justice system.

Ultimately, we call for a [wholehearted shift](#) from punishment to prevention and rehabilitation. This transformation would help improve resilience in our system, so it isn't in perpetual crisis.

How can we work together?

Here are three ways you can help us build back better:

- ✓ [Meet us](#) to discuss how we can work together to make our vision a reality.
- ✓ Ask us to put you in touch with your local Quaker meeting to discuss how you can build back better in your area.
- ✓ Tweet at [@BritishQuakers](#) and [@BuildBckBetterUK](#) using #BuildBackBetter.

For further information please visit our [website](#) or [get in touch](#).