

A UNISON guide to digital Organising for LGBT+ Equality



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1. Introduction

In a year that has seen so many of us turn to virtual means of communication, this guide explores how to maximise the use of our existing social media channels and how we can use other digital platforms to organise LGBT+ members.

Digital organising must be an integral part of our overall approach to recruiting and campaigning for LGBT+ equality. Every year our members attend and participate in an ever-growing number of Pride and community events across the UK. Digital communications can help us to further raise the profile of our work, engage new activists to participate and enable us to recruit new members into our union.

This guide also covers new ways to holding meetings online and to deliver virtual training using a variety of platforms, exploring the many benefits to this approach, but also acknowledging the drawbacks, particularly the access issues this can present.

The guide also explores new ways to develop virtual Pride and other events, highlighting some of the many good practice examples which will strengthen our ability to communicate our campaign messages and grow our union.

This guide is also accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation on our website www.unison.org.uk/out entitled: '**Digital Organising for LGBT+ Equality**' which includes speaker notes to support Regions and Branch LGBT+ Self Organised Groups to explore taking a digital approach to our work.

Please note, none of the tools mentioned in this presentation are necessarily endorsements, these are examples of many available online tools and platforms.

2. Social Media

2.1 The Basics

Many UNISON LGBT+ Self Organised Groups at a regional and branch level now have social media accounts which they use as part of an integrated campaign plan, raising awareness of events, sharing information on our campaigns and promoting membership of our union.

It's important that we maximise the use of these channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (to name a few), and repeat our key messages across each of these to make sure our message reaches our members and potential members.

It is important to remember the basics:

- ✓ Post at least a few times a week.
- ✓ Post for maximum reach, between 7am to 9am or between 5pm and 7pm.
- ✓ Keep your post concise and to the point.
- ✓ Always post engaging and rich content – use pictures, videos and links.
- ✓ Use accessible language, keep it conversational and avoid jargon.
- ✓ Include a call to action – “share”, “join”, “attend”, “email your MP”, etc.
- ✓ Share content from other UNISON and partners accounts (remember to be careful to check the content/source prior to sharing).

It is a good idea to share the responsibility for keeping your social media channels up to date. Some groups share this across a variety of elected officers, this might include the Co-convenors, National Committee Reps, Publicity & Communications Officer and Sub-Regional Organisers.

It is also useful to have considered how you can encourage participation and manage any issues which might arise while using social media, such as offensive language, personal attacks and spam. The North West LGBT+ Self organised Group established a **Social Media Policy** to help facilitate the management of their channels, a copy of which is attached in **Appendix 1**.

2.2 Best Practice

Below are a series of best practice examples of posts that include a call to action:

Facebook

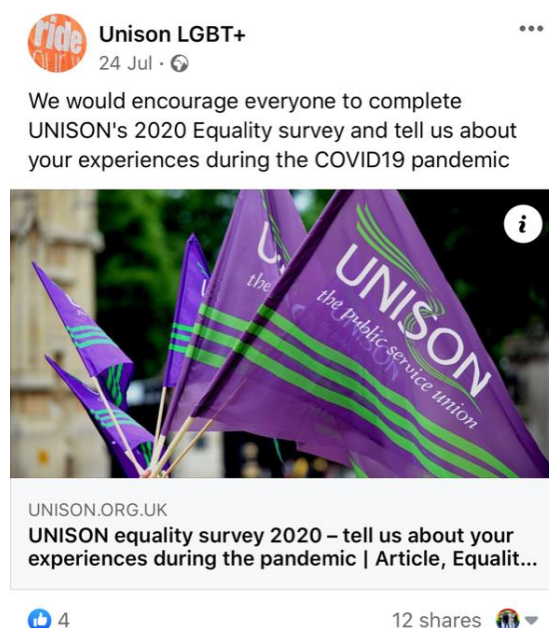
1. Call to action... 'attend'

Targeted message to LGBT+ Members to **attend** an event to record Pride greetings videos.



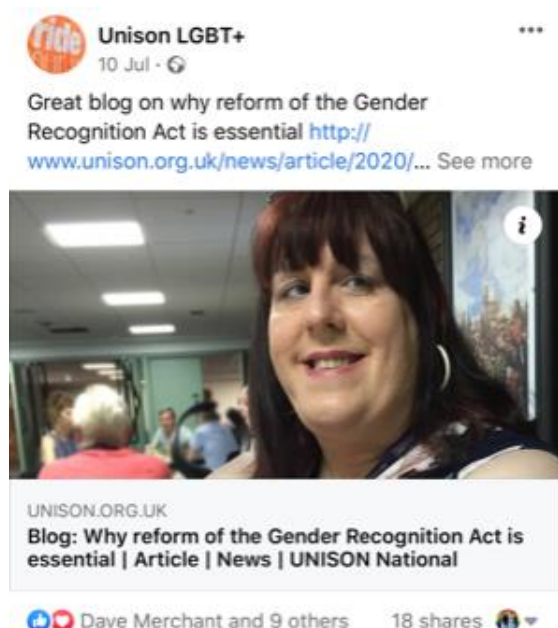
2. Call to action... 'complete'

Targeted message to LGBT+ Members to **complete** the UNISON annual equality survey.



3. Promoting blogs...

Targeted news articles to raise awareness of our campaigns with our members.



4. Promoting events...

Promoting a virtual Questions & Answers session on LGBT+ Rights.



Twitter

Is great for engaging people in our campaigns using hashtags and for acknowledging our members' work.



You Tube

For hosting videos which can be shared on other platforms, from talking heads, education videos & visuals of events.



Instagram

Is brilliant for sharing engaging visuals and for storytelling, sharing short videos on issues which matter to our members.



3. Holding Virtual Meetings

3.1 The Practicalities

COVID-19 has forced us to adopt virtual means of meetings of our members. Many Regional LGBT+ Groups are coming together regularly using a variety of meetings platforms, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, GoToMeeting, to name but a few.

When considering which platform to use when organising online meetings, you should always choose a 'free-to-attend' option. Regions and Branches may have bought a licence to specific platforms which give the organisers additional functionality. This might be important if you intend to use additional features, such as breakout rooms (where you can move delegates into smaller groups by virtually going to different rooms), etc. The majority of free to use platforms allow you share a PowerPoint presentation, but it is important that you check this before you start your meeting.

It is also important that you check that you have the necessary permissions to hold your meetings virtually either with the Regional Secretariate or your Branch Committee. If you are struggling to get permission to hold virtual meetings you can seek advice from our National Officer for LGBT+ Equality by emailing: out@unison.co.uk.

You should give due consider to security and confidentiality, use a simple registration process as you would normally for a meeting; sending the joining instructions following registration; and use "waiting rooms" asking people to use the name they registered with.

3.2 Accessibility

UNISON is committed to the social model of disability and to removing or reducing the barriers disabled people face at work and in society. This includes ensuring all our online meetings are accessible to our disabled members and they are able to participate fully.

Thinking about accessibility is essential for any virtual meeting, consider:

- how information can be accessible for attendees - give members adequate notice and share paperwork in advance, including circulating any presentations which would be shared in advance (not everyone will be able to view these on screen depending on how they access the meeting).
- Ensure you give enough notice to arrange any reasonable adjustments required, such as a BSL interpreter. Captioning can be provided by an external supplier. With Zoom they are allocated the role of captioning, and the captions appear at the bottom of the screen. With webinar, a separate link may need to be provided for the captions, on some systems this can be viewed over the webinar page, but on others it can't (some people have used a separate device for the text as they found it easier). Microsoft Teams have also recently launched live captions as part of its platform.
- Remember not everyone will have access to all the platform features – such as "raise hand" particularly if they are dialling into the meeting, consider how you will take questions and provide opportunities for everyone to speak.
- A UNISON Guide to ensuring accessible virtual meetings and events can be found on our website [here](#).

3.3 Meeting Etiquette

It is helpful to set some ground rules and agree a shared understanding for how your virtual meetings will run, it is worth considering the following:



Mute your microphone when you are not speaking; this helps reduce background noise.



Cameras are not essential, it is nice to see people, but don't expect or ask people to turn their camera on. Some people may not have a webcam or they may have a poor internet connection.



Run your meeting to time, start and finish your meeting at the advertised times, people have busy lives and they are giving their time freely, it is important not to abuse it.



Take regular breaks, treat your meeting like an in person one, plan in regular comfort breaks.



Agree a facilitator, if you are chairing the meeting, you have an important job ensuring it is conducted properly, is jargon free, ensuring debates are managed and summing up decisions; having someone monitoring the raise hand function and the chat helps to ensure everyone who wants to speak gets the opportunity to.

3.4 Benefits of Virtual Meetings

Virtual meetings during the current global pandemic provide us an opportunity for members to still meet one another safely and for us to check in on the wellbeing of our Activists. They can facilitate the attendance of people who might not otherwise participate due to geography and travel time and may still have a place once we can return to in-person meetings.

Holding virtual meetings helps us to continue to do the work of a trade union... to organise, to campaign, to negotiate and to improve the conditions for all workers. They provide us the opportunity to review and keep making progress on our work plans and provide an opportunity for our members to discuss and debate the issues affecting LGBT+ workers.



They still provide the opportunity for us to bring in experts and guest speakers to share their knowledge with our members during these unprecedented times.

4. Running Virtual Member Training Events

Member development and education remains an essential part of our organising work. Whilst in-person training often provides the best environment for learning and networking, virtual training events can still provide a powerful method to growing our activists and building our campaigning and organising capability.

4.1 Picking the Right Platform

Different platforms provide different features and functionality which lend themselves to different types of learning approaches – such as:

 Microsoft Teams	Features: video calls, screen sharing, live chat, up to 300 participants, dialogue transcription. Free to join, some features require Microsoft Office 365.
 zoom	Features: video calls, screen sharing, dialogue transcript, breakout rooms. Free to join/host but limited to 40 minutes, some features require subscription.
 Skype	Features: video calls with groups of up to 50 participants, screen sharing, well known, live chat, but prone to audio/visual problems. Free.
 GoToMeeting	Features: video calls, up to 100 participants, screen presenting. Chat features are a separate app. Free to join, cost to host, some features require subscription.

4.2 Approaches and Practicalities

Consider the best approach to delivering the training:

- **Presentations** – live or pre-recorded presentation sharing knowledge.
- **Workshops** – interactive sessions, which may include a presentation and would involve group discussions, discussing the topic; or
- **Expert Panels** – input from experts on topics, followed by Q&A's.

Who might be best to deliver the training:

- You and/or your fellow Activists;
- Your Regional/Branch Education Officer; and/or
- Guest/Expert Speaker.

What resources would help people enhance their learning:

- Presentations slides;
- Factsheets / handouts (see our website: www.unison.org.uk/out); the UNISON Organising Space; and
- Videos and website links for further reading.

5. Other Digital Organising Tools

There are a range of other digital tools which can help in organising our members including:



Messaging Apps - The National Committee and many regional groups have setup WhatsApp messaging groups to stay in touch with members and to help facilitate discussion on key issues and to share important information between meetings.



Email - It remains a staple, love it or hate it, it is still the fastest tool to communicate with groups of members. Email enables us to send out paperwork, guidance, event information and to share key messages with our members.



Newsletters - There are a variety of digital newsletter tools, including UNISON's own and others such as MailChimp. These allow us to share messages in a more digitally accessible and engaging format, embedding images, video, blogs and web links.



Polls - Tools such as Doodle Poll can be useful when trying to arrange convenient times for people to come together using simple date/time polls to maximise participation when arranging events.



Petitions - Setting up or promoting petitions are a great way to affect change and to engage a wide audience in our campaigns. Be clear on who you want to target, what you want to change and why it is important, then use social media to promote & share.

6. Digital Prides and other events

6.1 Going Digital

COVID has led to many virtual events popping up as a way of continuing to campaign and organise around particular issues facing LGBT+ people.

UNISON LGBT+ Groups have swiftly adapted, taking part in an array of events such as virtual Pride marches; seminars; live Question and Answer sessions; educational videos; capturing lived experiences digitally; partnering in film screenings and many more.

So, what might we need to consider when running virtual events:

- Remember to pick an important LGBT+ campaign issue to centre your event around.
- Considering who might be our natural partners, can we work with others to organise a joint event, be it an online Q&A session or Seminar as part of a virtual Pride?
- What is the best method: consider talking head videos which could be released on your social media channels; interactive session using Facebook live or other platforms such as Zoom; or virtual training event?
- How can you maximise the audience, including non-members providing the opportunity to recruit new members, through digital advertising on social media and sending information about the event to mailing lists including asking partners to share details?

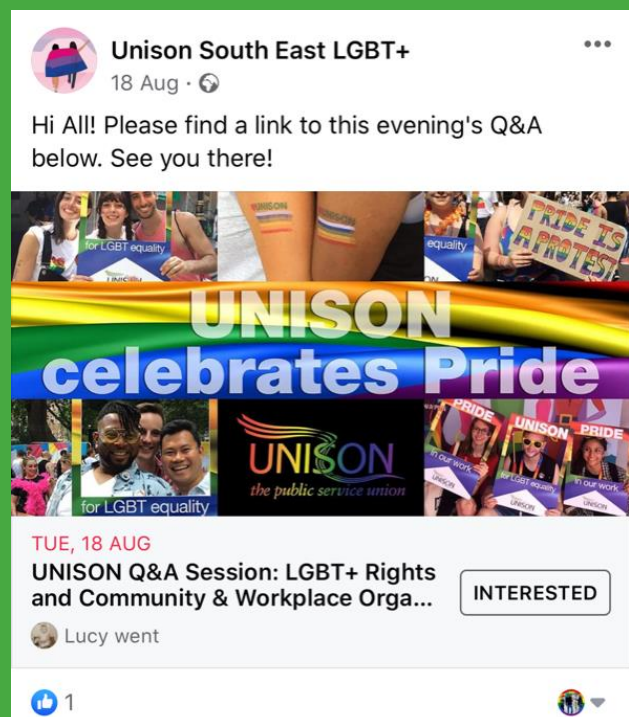
Digital “events” could also take the form of a video released to coincide with a national awareness day, such as to mark ‘International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia’, see the case study below from UNISON East Midlands LGBT+ Group.

6.2 Case Study: Medway and Gravesham Virtual Pride

The organisers of Medway and Gravesham Prides – were among those faced with the disappointment of having to cancel their plans due to COVID-19. The organisers came together to deliver a virtual event.

The organisers were overjoyed when UNISON South East LGBT+ Committee offered to get involved and run a live Q&A session on workplace rights and the role of trade unions in tackling discrimination and inequality.

The success of the event was testament to the dedication and ingenuity of the organisers, and a great advert for the support UNISON continues to provide its members in the toughest of circumstances.



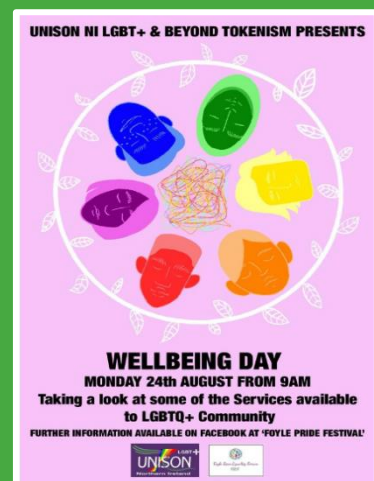
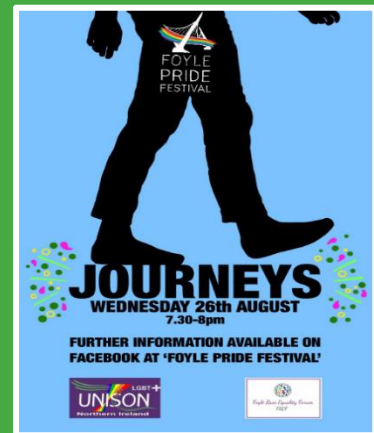
6.3 Case Study: Foyle Pride Festival

UNISON Northern Ireland LGBT+ Group worked with Beyond Tokenism and other partners to host a series of events as part of Foyle Pride.

‘Journeys’ was a video project, which captured LGBT+ people telling their stories using an object, anything from keys, a photo or a mug. They covered a large range of issues from homelessness to our work on Palestine. This was a great success with over 1800 views online and has been a great tool to highlight their work and recruit new members.

The group also ran a **‘Wellbeing Day’** with contributions for a range of partners looking at everything from appropriate language to the PSNI (Police Service of Northern Ireland) letting the community know how to report hate crime. The event also highlighted Youth Services from Cara-Friend and LGBT+ Services from the Rainbow Project. Again, this had a great response with several thousand views and shares on social media.

These videos can be viewed on the Foyle Pride Festival [YouTube Channel](#) and Facebook page.



6.4 Case Study: TUC LGBT+ Mental Health Online Seminar

Laura Heaton, a UNISON North West LGBT+ Committee rep on the North West TUC LGBT+ Group co-organised and chaired a virtual event on the eve of Manchester Pride on Young LGBT+ Mental Health and Suicide Awareness. This followed a successful motion to UNISON’s 2019 LGBT+ Conference.

The panel included: Charlotte Nichols, Labour MP; Quinn Roache, TUC Equalities Policy Officer; and Sarah Skelton, Papyrus UK. Each spoke for 10 minutes with the opportunity for questions.

The event was a huge success with many questions from attendees. A video of the event can be viewed on the [TUC North West Facebook Page](#).

The event has now developed into a wider piece of work, with a social media campaign and resources in development.



6.5 Case Study: International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

UNISON East Midlands LGBT+ Group produced a video to mark International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia on the 17th May.

The video includes various members of the group talking about LGBT+ history; discrimination; hate crime; mental health; LGBT+ visibility; and the role of UNISON in calling out injustices, fighting for change and supporting our members.

The video was shared on social media and has been viewed over thousand times. The video can be viewed on YouTube [here](#).

A follow up statement developed in consultation with the East Midlands Black Members Self Organised Group was published as part of Pride Month in June. The statement can be accessed [here](#).

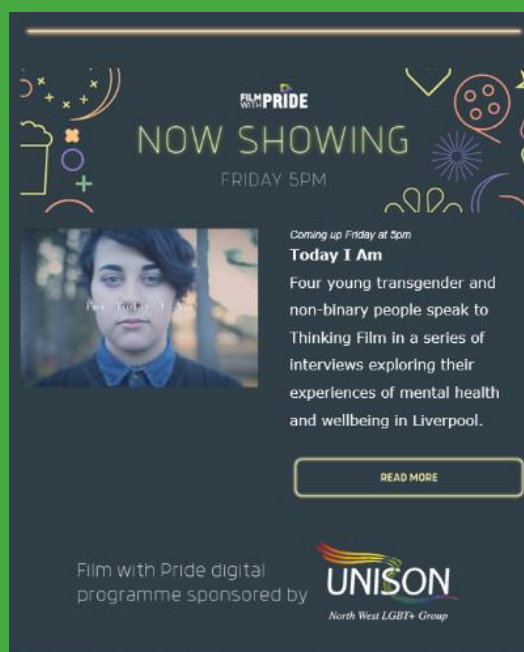


6.6 Case Study: Virtual Film Screenings

The UNISON North West LGBT+ Group has had a positive and engaging relationship with Liverpool Pride since it first launched in 2010. As part of that relationship, we've supported Film with Pride, their programme to take LGBT+ films into local cinemas. These are normally monthly screenings, where as part of our support we're able to hold a stall, engage with attendees and show a UNISON advert at the start of the screen.

When COVID-19 hit, cinemas had to close, which meant that Film with Pride couldn't carry out their usual programme of screenings. However, with the support of UNISON, the organisers were able to adapt and take their screenings online, hosting weekly viewing parties for a wide and diverse range of short films.

This coincided with Liverpool Pride launching their weekly newsletter, which resulted in a fantastic publicity opportunity for us as lead supporters for Film with Pride. We helped by promoting the online screenings on social media and have been delighted by the engagement.



Appendix 1 – Example Social Media Policy

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The UNISON North West Regional Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender + (LGBT+) Self Organised Group utilises a range of Social Media for the purposes of organising, recruiting and campaign in line with it's objectives set out in its constitution and those of the wider union.

At present these include:

- Facebook page: www.facebook.com/unisonnwlgbt
- Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/unisonlgbtsog/
- Twitter page: www.twitter.com/unisonnwlgbt
- Mailchimp: under the account name – unisonnwlgbt

Administration:

All pages are administered by the elected representatives from the Regional LGBT+ Committee namely: Convenors, National Committee Reps, Sub Regional Organising Officers, Publicity and Communications Officer and Secretary.

Conduct:

UNISON members and staff are expected to treat each other with tolerance, dignity and respect. UNISON is made up of members from a complex and diverse range of social, cultural, religious and political backgrounds and it is essential that members respect this in all their dealings with each other.

The regional LGBT+ Committee welcomes and encourages member participation on our social media pages. All comments will be reviewed after they are posted and we reserve the right to remove any postings, including but not limited to:

- **Offensive language:**
Comments that include obscenities, racist, homophobic, transphobic or biphobic personal insults or language that may be considered inflammatory, harassing or offensive will be removed.
- **Personal attacks:**
If you have a complaint or concern, please contact us via the associated Regional Officer. Please refrain from posting personal attacks or being disrespectful of others. Malicious postings will be deleted.
- **Illegal material:**
Laws and regulations that govern use of copyrights, trademarks, harassment and defamation, etc., will be followed.
- **Spam:**
Comments focused on selling a product or service, or for the purpose of driving traffic to a non-affiliated website for personal, political, or monetary gain will be removed.
- **Private or confidential information:**
DO NOT provide personal information on our social media pages. If you need immediate service, please contact the UNISON directly at UNISONdirect on 0845 355 0845.

Encouraging member participation:

A strong union depends on the fullest possible participation of as many members as possible. This helps our negotiating strength; it ensures that we represent all members and that we are a democratic union.

Anyone wishing to participate in one of our Social Media pages is expected to have due regard to the participation of others. As such you should ensure that your privacy settings do not disenfranchise other members of the group by blocking them from viewing your posts to these pages.

Removal of users from our Social Media pages:

We reserve the right to remove any user from our social media pages who:

- disregards, disobeys or breaks any of the rules set out in this Social Media Policy or the union rulebook; or
- acts in a manner prejudicial or detrimental to the union, her/his branch, region, self organised group or service group; or
- commits any act of discrimination or harassment on grounds of race, gender, marital status, sexuality, gender identity, disability, age, creed or social class or any other discriminatory conduct which is prejudicial to the aims and objectives of UNISON.

The removal of any user from our social media pages will be reported to the next Committee Meeting in closed session.

Anyone who wishes to contest the removal of a post or them being removed as a user should lodge this with the Regional Officer who will report these to the next Committee Meeting (in closed session) for review and arbitrate.



Contact the UNISON National LGBT+ Group via out@unison.co.uk

Or contact: Susan Mawhood, National Officer, LGBT+ Equality

write to: UNISON, 130 Euston Road, London NW1 2AY

ring: 0207 121 5799

email s.mawhood@unison.co.uk