

Connecting People Online

A Resource for LGBTI Groups



Thank You to Contributors

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this resource.

Funded by...

The Scottish Government via the National Lottery
Community Fund Scotland

The LGBT+ Futures Fund



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



COMMUNITY
FUND



LGBT+ FUTURES
Grants Programme

Contents

Introduction	2
The Benefits of Online Connection	3
Challenges of Remote Engagement	6
Hybrid Events	8
Positive Online Engagement	10
Primary Tools of Online Engagement	15
Secondary Tools of Online Engagement	17
Creating and Implementing a Social Media Strategy	20
Understanding Social Media Platforms	25
Facebook	26
Twitter	32
TikTok	38
Instagram	40
Test, Evaluate, and Adjust	44
Making Social Media More Accessible	45
Appendix	47

Introduction

The Equality Network supports the development and sustainability of LGBTI groups across Scotland and has done since 2001. We provide one-to-one support, develop leaders, deliver training and residential events; and publish resources focused on the priorities of groups.

Connecting LGBTI people is a key objective of LGBTI groups across Scotland; not connecting for the sake of it, but to reduce isolation, share information and create spaces where people can belong. Connecting online through social media and virtual events has always been a part of what groups deliver, but the pandemic has made online delivery all the more important.

This resource aims to support your LGBTI group as it connects LGBTI people online, helping equip you with knowledge of tools and techniques to get the most from the online space.



Scott Cuthbertson
Development Manager



Eleanor Sanders White
Development Officer



The Benefits of Online Connection

The pandemic meant online connection was necessary for many of us, and it also taught us the benefits of this form of connection. So what are they?



Reach

Though digital exclusion remains an issue, through online engagement we can connect with people all over Scotland, or further afield. This can help people meet others experiencing similar situations to them, or with similar identities. Online communities can be useful for people facing multiple marginalisation, enabling them to find a safe space, for example, those who may experience discrimination within the LGBTI community itself.



Online engagement during the pandemic has enabled some LGBTI people in rural Scotland to get more involved in LGBTI activity. There remain barriers for rural and island communities who find it difficult to travel to in-person activities, they are often too far, too costly, or both. Online engagement removes this geographical barrier.

Flexibility and convenience

Online engagement can mean greater flexibility and convenience. There is no travel time involved, and no need to book a venue with the associated costs. People can engage from just about anywhere with an internet connection, meaning issues such as the need for childcare can be reduced. If something does come up that means someone cannot attend a session, the possibility of recording a livestream means people do not necessarily miss out.

Accessibility

Online engagement can be more accessible for many who have limited mobility or hearing and visual impairments. Equally, it can better suit some people who are neurodiverse, as it can accommodate different needs, for example, for those who do not want to make eye-contact, feel over-stimulated, or find it difficult to meet groups of new people.

For people living with certain mental health issues, such as anxiety, online engagement can enable them to take breaks, or leave should they need to.



Engaging online can also act as a steppingstone to in-person engagement, helping people to feel comfortable in group settings again.

As always, it is important not to assume what will be best for others, and when in doubt, ask them.

Creativity

Online engagement can enable facilitators and attendees to get creative. There are a range of tools and features that can make workshops and meetings more interesting and fun. These can cater for different learning styles, for example, visual vs audio learners, those who prefer large group discussions, or those who get on best in smaller groups.

Challenges of Remote Engagement



Crossing boundaries

One of the main challenges of online engagement is the blurring of the personal and the 'formal'. Most of us engage online from our homes or personal spaces, which can feel invasive.

Being able to see ourselves on platforms such as Zoom or Teams can make us feel self-conscious or insecure, particularly when we are not used to this.

Social cues and misunderstandings

It can be harder to understand social cues remotely, and to recognise when someone is struggling. This can make it more difficult to support people with their mental health, or to prevent misunderstandings and conflicts arising.

'Informal' moments are also harder to come by, and small talk can feel more stilted and awkward.



Managing group dynamics

The job of an online facilitator is different to in-person. Managing conversations can be a complex task online, particularly when multiple discussions may be going on e.g., through the chat function of Zoom (explained more later). It is easier for someone to dominate a conversation online, or for it to become derailed and steered in a particular direction.

No substitute for face-to-face

For some people, digital activities can never replace meeting in-person. We need to be mindful of this and remember that online does not work for everyone, and it can lead to increased digital fatigue.

Cost

While online events can reduce costs for organisers, they can also increase costs for attendees, who may have to purchase and maintain equipment and services to get online.

Hybrid Events

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is how to run online events and meetings. As noted, what we had to do out of necessity has had its advantages for some.

Given what we have learnt, what should we think about as LGBTI groups for future events?

In the following table, we consider some of the future options available to LGBTI groups. Each has advantages and disadvantages that need to be considered. You may want to trial several different approaches to find which works best or ask your community what they would like.

Exclusively face-to-face	Rotational	Hybrid	Exclusively virtual
Meetings where people meet in the same physical location.	Some events are face-to-face, others are virtual.	Individual meetings have both face-to-face and virtual participants.	Meetings where people only interact online using a computer or phone, and software.
Benefits			
<p>More social interaction between participants.</p> <p>Sensory input and networking opportunities tend to be greater.</p> <p>Opportunities for mind mapping and relationship building are usually greater.</p> <p>Shared context, and access to nonverbal cues like expressions and body language.</p>	<p>Reduces face-to-face costs such as room hire.</p> <p>Can break down events into elements which are best delivered face-to-face and those best for virtual delivery.</p>	<p>People who cannot normally attend due to distance, cost or accessibility requirements may be able to under this option.</p> <p>People have the choice to decide each meeting whether virtual or face-to-face suits them best.</p>	<p>People living far from the event location can participate.</p> <p>No room hire, catering, audio-visual and / or travel costs for participants.</p> <p>Lower environmental impact.</p> <p>Easy recording and online distribution.</p>
Negatives			
<p>Increased travel time and costs for participants.</p> <p>Room hire, catering and audio-visual costs.</p> <p>The number of attendees can be limited due to space or budget.</p>	<p>Increases some costs for technology.</p> <p>Some participants only come to virtual events and others only to face-to-face.</p>	<p>Experienced facilitator is required to ensure those participating virtually are as included.</p> <p>May have to include accessibility costs for both face-to-face and virtual elements.</p>	<p>Costs of purchasing technology for both hosts and participants.</p> <p>Can increase digital fatigue.</p> <p>Attention spans for attendees interacting with a screen tend to be shorter.</p> <p>Numbers limited depending on purchased product.</p>

Positive Online Engagement

Creating a positive online space does not have to involve technical wizardry. The following can help any online engagement run smoother and may help with face-to-face meetings too.

Managing expectations

Preparation, preparation, preparation... a lot of what creates positive online engagement stems from people knowing what to expect. Giving people information about what is going to happen, and when, means they can make a more informed choice about whether they want to attend. This avoids disappointment, stress, and confusion.

When people can digest information before an online activity, they can come prepared, leading to better conversations and making the job of the facilitator much easier. Try the following:

- **Send an 'agenda' ahead of time (this should ideally be more than a day in advance).** The agenda should include a breakdown of the main parts of the meeting or workshop, and at what times these occur. You may want to lay out some objectives if relevant, detailing what people might get out of the session and who it is for.



- **Manage expectations of involvement** – if you are hoping for a highly interactive workshop, then say this in advance. If it may be more ‘webinar’ style, then let people know there will be minimal opportunities for engagement.
- **Tell people the questions or topics you are hoping to explore in advance** – some people are comfortable with thinking on their feet, others like time to process information.

If there will be background or context that people need to understand, then send this beforehand. This reduces the likelihood of people feeling out of their depth.

Structuring your engagement

Try to include variety in your online activities (explored more later). This could include the use of tools, such as polls, quizzes etc.



If you are hoping to use tools when engaging people online, let people know to expect this. You might want to send round information about these before a meeting so people can familiarise themselves.

You could ask your community what activities they would like to see online, or topics they want to cover. This may even allow you to step back as facilitator / leader for some sessions, and let others run these instead. This can be empowering and create a sense of community ownership.

Multiple facilitators and channels of communication

If you have capacity, try having more than one facilitator supporting your online activity. Usually there are multiple ways of participating in online platforms, and that means it can be harder to keep up with what is going on. You could have a volunteer attend whose role is to monitor a chat function on Zoom, or to make sure people with raised hands are not ignored. You could also let people know that they can message that person privately if they are struggling during the session.

Creating a safe space

We can never guarantee that everyone attending will be respectful, but we can take steps to make this more likely, and to handle problems at the time.

Write up a code of conduct

A code of conduct is a shared agreement of respect between everyone in a meeting. Check out the Equality Network's code of conduct as an example here: bit.ly/3gnjHij



Send round the code of conduct beforehand

Send out a link to your code of conduct, as well as a brief explanation of this prior to the online activity. Make sure people agree to abide by it.

Repeat your code of conduct in brief at the start of the meeting

As part of your welcome, restate that everyone in the room needs to respect one another, and that any form of discrimination will not be tolerated.

Do not be afraid to remove people where needed

If someone breaks the code of conduct, or makes the online space unsafe, then you as the host can remove this person.

Managing digital fatigue

Depending on the length and intensity of your online activity, you may need to provide one or more comfort breaks. Schedule these at regular intervals, e.g., if your meeting is an hour long, you may want to place a 10-minute break in the middle. Online engagement can be more tiring than in-person, and breaks help people refocus and revitalise.



Feedback and continuous improvement

What works for one group may not work for another. The only way of really knowing what your community wants is to ask them. You can do this by offering short feedback forms before and after some online activities. Put this feedback into action, doing more of what works, and improving what does not.

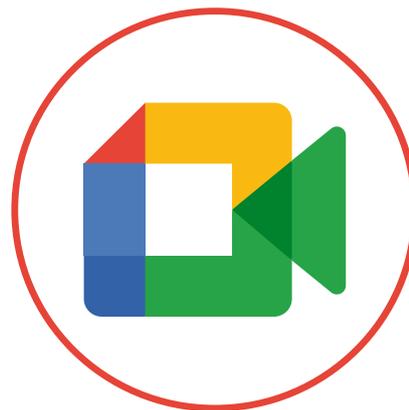
Primary Tools of Online Engagement

In this section, we look at some of the main online tools people are using, including their features and costs.

The Equality Network has been supporting groups with online tools and has run a number of training events, mostly on the use of Zoom. If your group has any specific questions, you can contact us, and we will try to help.

As with any product you are buying to use, you should give it a try first!

The four main online meeting tools are Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Zoom, and GoToMeeting. Many others are available.



Connecting People Online – A Resource for LGBTI Groups

Microsoft Teams	Google Meet	Zoom	GoToMeeting
-----------------	-------------	------	-------------

Maximum Participants

Few events run by community groups will run up against the maximum number of participants each tool allows, but there may be occasions where this will be a consideration.

Free: Up to 100	Free: Up to 100	Free: Up to 100	Free: Up to 3
Business Basic: Up to 300	Workspace Essentials: Up to 150	Pro: Up to 1000 (+1000 with purchased add-on)	Pro: Up to 150

Time limits

Nobody wants to feel that they have not had the time to discuss what is important to them. If you are running a committee meeting or a full day event, think about how much time each platform offers you.

Free: 1 hr	Free: 24 hrs 1:1 or 1 hr 3+ participants	Free: 40 mins	Free: 40 mins
Business Basic: 24 hrs	Workspace Essentials: 24 hrs	Pro: Up to 30 hours	Pro: No time limit

Recording

Recording meetings can be very useful. Recordings can be used to help with minutes or can be put online for training or presentations. It is important to ask for permission from attendees first.

Free: Not Available	Free: Not Available	Free: Local Recording	Free: Not Available
Business Basic: Cloud Recording	Workplace Essentials: Cloud Recording	Pro: Local & Cloud Recording	Pro: Cloud Recording

Screen sharing

Sharing your screen so others can see what you are seeing on your screen is an important feature. It can help with planning and watching short presentations.

Multiple people can share both desktop and applications.	Multiple people can share both desktop and applications.	Multiple people can share both desktop and applications.	Multiple people can share both desktop and applications.
--	--	--	--

Captions

Having captions can help make your meetings more accessible.

Real-time captions.	Available using speech-to-text technology.	Free: Manual captioning	Pro: Not available
		Pro: Manual captioning or new live transcripts.	Business: Searchable transcripts available.

Cost

Cost is a vital factor in whether or not these tools are available to your group. Each platform has a free version, but it can limit what features are available.

Free version: Yes	Free version: Yes	Free version: Yes	Free version: Yes
Business Basic: £3.80 per user/per month (as part of annual commitment)	Business Starter: £4.14 per user/per month (as part of annual commitment)	Pro: £14.39 per month, per license £143.88 per year, per license	Pro: £11 per month or £114 annually

Secondary Tools of Online Engagement

There are lots of secondary tools we can use to help engage people successfully online. Two common ones are **Padlet** and **Jamboard**, but try experimenting with a few and see what works for you. The following is a short summary of how Padlet and Jamboard can be used, and what they are.

:Padlet

What is Padlet? Padlet is an online notice board. This can feature images, links, videos, text, and documents. Padlet allows you to insert ideas anonymously or with your name, and can be accessed using a phone, computer, or tablet. Padlet can be used for free, but you will be limited to three boards at a time.

How does it work?

Go to padlet.com to download the app on Android or iOS. To add to a Padlet board you can:

- double click anywhere on the board;
- drag files in;
- paste from clipboard;
- save as bookmark with Padlet mini;
- or just click the '+' button in the lower right corner^[1]

Using Padlet on Zoom... As Padlet requires people to look at it, you can launch an *audio-only* Zoom meeting, so this runs in the background. You can then share a Padlet link with everyone, so you will be able to speak to each other while editing Padlet in real time.

You can make your Padlet board collaborative by sharing a link or QR code with those attending.



What is Jamboard? Google Jamboard is like Padlet. It is a shared virtual whiteboard that enables people to collaborate in real-time remotely.

How does it work?

Jamboard can be downloaded as an app on Android or iOS, and it can be used for free on your computer, phone, or tablet. Go to edu.google.com/products/jamboard



Each 'Jam' starts off blank. Content can be added using tools on the left-hand side of the page, for example, you can add text boxes, sticky notes, images, and illustrations. You can change the size, font, and colour of your text at the top of the Jam page. You can add new 'Jam' frames for the different parts of your workshop / meeting.

How to share Jamboard with others... Your Jamboard can either be shared by inviting specific people via their email address or by generating a link that can be distributed to multiple people.

Using Jamboard on Zoom... Again, Jamboard requires attendees to look at it, so launch an *audio-only* Zoom meeting. You can then share a Jamboard link with everyone, so you and your attendees will be able to speak to each other while editing the Jamboard.

For more information on how to use Jamboard, you can access the help centre here: bit.ly/3x9BGj6



Other tools

There are a range of other tools you could try, depending on the sort of activities you want to include. **Remember that the digital skills of attendees may vary, and you will need to support people to use digital tools.**



Kahoot is an online learning platform where you can play or create your own games and quizzes to be used as part of online activities. You can also use Kahoot to create interactive workshops and training, but there is a monthly cost for a premium account.

Miro is an online collaborative whiteboard platform, like Padlet or Jamboard. Miro is free and has lots of features, including in-built templates, frameworks, sticky notes etc.



Jackbox games can be played remotely using a computer, phone, or tablet. You will need to purchase a package of games to start using Jackbox, but it is free for your attendees to then join in.

Mentimeter can help you create interactive presentations and meetings with the use of live polls, quizzes and word clouds. Attendees can use smartphones to connect with your presentation and answer questions. Mentimeter can be used for free, but features are limited. Pro accounts have costs attached.



Anchor, by Spotify, is a free tool to make podcasting easy, with built-in uploading, recording, and editing tools.

Creating and Implementing a Social Media Strategy

Creating and implementing a social media strategy will make your online content more effective, and you will be more likely to reach people.

What is a social media strategy? “A social media strategy is a summary of everything you plan to do and hope to achieve on social media. It guides your actions and lets you know whether you are succeeding”.^[2]

Social media objectives and goals

The first step to creating your strategy should be setting objectives and goals. To do this, you should first **identify your audience...** This could be other community groups, funders, LGBTI people or specific subsections of the population, such as ‘trans youth in the Glasgow area’.

Decide on your objectives... Do not use social media for the sake of it. Think about what it can do for you. For example, are you wanting to promote your group and work, raise awareness of a specific issue, provide advice and information, or entertain people? Your objectives are likely to be a mix of these things.

Decide what your goals are... Your chosen objectives and audiences should influence your goals. You may want some overarching goals such as: more engagement with your group and its work, increased follows and likes, or increased membership.

You could set more **specific goals** within these. These should be 'SMART', which means:

SMART



SPECIFIC



MEASURABLE



ATTAINABLE



RELEVANT



TIME-BOUND^[3]

Create brief mission statements for each social media platform... Work out which of your goals and objectives relate to each of your social media platforms. If you do not feel that you know this, our sections on the uses of specific platforms may help.

Conduct a social media audit

What is a ‘social media audit’? This means making a list of the platforms you use, how you use them, your current followers etc. and who has access to the logins.

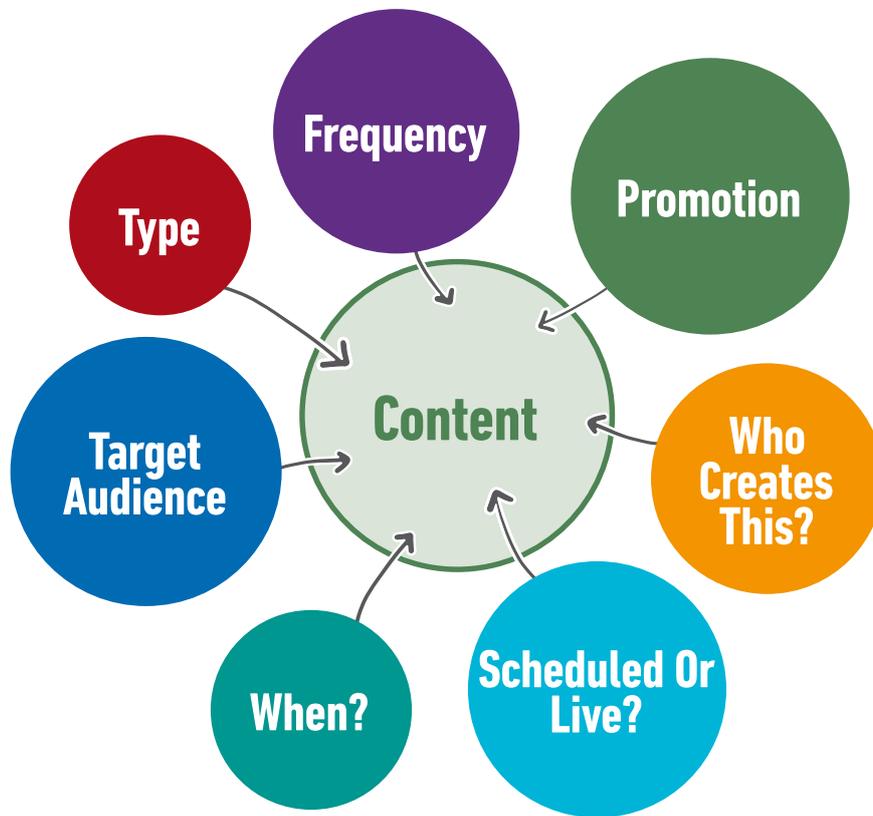
Do not be afraid to get rid of accounts that no longer serve a purpose. Just make sure to let people know that you are closing them and help people to migrate over to your other social media channels.

Create a content marketing plan

Think about your group’s voice, tone, and style...

- *Do you want a friendly, informal tone?*
- *Do you want to create informative posts that are to the point?*
- *Do you want your style to be in line with your branding?*

When deciding on your social media content, think about the following:



Create a social media content calendar

Sharing great content is essential, but you need to plan when you will do this. Create a **social media content calendar** which takes into account each type of social media you use, and the time you spend interacting with your audience. For more info and a free calendar template, scan the QR code:

bit.ly/3pEk8JE



Choose a balance of content

If you are starting from scratch, and you are not sure what types of content to post, Hootsuite recommend the 80-20 rule:

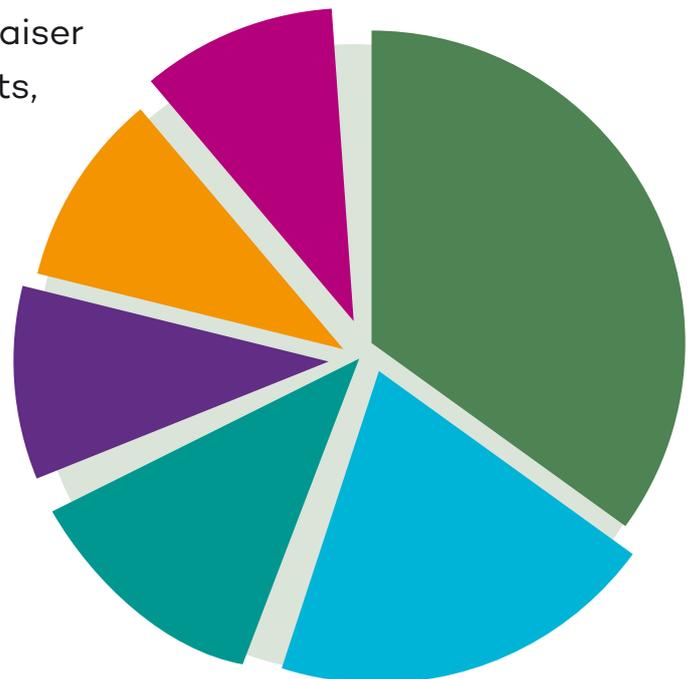
80% of your posts should inform, educate, or entertain your audience

20% can directly promote your group.



If you already have social media experience, you might want to create more specific content targets. For example, you might decide that:

- 35% will be curated from other sources (sharing knowledge, resources for LGBTI people, other events etc.)
- 20% of content will be about your group's activities and upcoming events
- 15% will be about your current fundraiser (updates on milestones, achievements, reminders of the link to give etc.).
- 10% will be for the purposes of entertainment
- 10% will be input from your community (information gathering such as surveys and polls)
- 10% will link people to your website



Understanding Social Media Platforms

This next section will help you to understand and explore some of the most popular social media platforms.



TWITTER

MICRO BLOGGING SOCIAL SITE THAT LIMITS EACH POST TO **280** CHARACTERS

THERE ARE **16.45** MILLION TWITTER USERS IN THE UK

6,000 TWEETS ON AVERAGE HAPPEN EVERY SECOND

326 MILLION MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS



FACEBOOK

MOBILE IS FACEBOOK'S CASH COW

1.57 BILLION DAILY ACTIVE MOBILE USERS

44% OF UK POPULATION USE FACEBOOK EVERY DAY

USERS SHARE **1 MILLION** LINKS EVERY 20 MINUTES

2.23 BILLION MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS



TIKTOK

CREATE, SHARE AND DISCOVER SHORT VIDEOS

13 MILLION ACTIVE UK USERS

DOWNLOADED **ONE MILLION** TIMES A MONTH IN THE UK

41 MINUTES DAILY AVERAGE USE

689 MILLION MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS



INSTAGRAM

SOCIAL SHARING APP ALL AROUND PICTURES AND 60 SECOND VIDEOS

MANY BRANDS PARTICIPATE THROUGH THE USE OF # HASHTAGS AND POSTING

PICTURES CONSUMERS CAN RELATE TO

MOST FOLLOWED BRAND IS NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

1 BILLION MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS

FACEBOOK

- Monthly users: 2.8 billion^[4]
- Largest age group: 25-34 year olds^[5]
- Time spent on Facebook: 19.5 hours monthly^[6]



Facebook remains the most used and engaged with social media platform. While it is not entirely true that younger people have stopped using Facebook, evidence does suggest that its users are getting older. However, Facebook remains the preferred platform of young adults. So, if you are looking for mass appeal, Facebook is your friend.

What is Facebook used for?

Facebook is used to connect with friends, organise and discover new events and social spaces, and as a regular source of information and news. Groups can use Facebook to share content, photos, conduct surveys, set up events, create community groups, and even fundraise. If you are needing to write a long post, Facebook is the easiest platform to do this on. You can use your other social media platforms to hook people into the post, e.g., uploading a photo on Instagram with a link to the Facebook post.

Setting up Facebook right

Create a Facebook Page; do not use your personal profile...

Using a personal profile means missing out on great features, but more importantly, blurs the line between professional and personal life. It is easy to pick a Page that is right for your group and free to set up.

Avoid accidental publishing with Page roles...

Assign Page roles only to those who absolutely need to publish content to reduce the chance of accidental publishing from personal profiles.

On your Facebook page, click “Settings”, then click “Page Roles”.

Provide training to those with publishing privileges to reduce the likelihood of accidental publishing further.



When sharing content on behalf of your group, make sure you are not posting as yourself... You can check that by going into your settings and clicking “Page Attribution”.

Add an engaging profile picture... An appealing and memorable profile picture is key to getting found and liked, especially in **Facebook Search**, where it shows up in the results next to your group name. The most common choice is your logo, if you have one, but make sure it is the right size and cropped to fit.



Choose a high quality and engaging cover photo... Your cover photo takes up the most space at the top of your Page so this needs to appeal to visitors. The recommended dimensions of both Facebook pictures and cover photos can change, so have a look at the current Facebook guidelines.

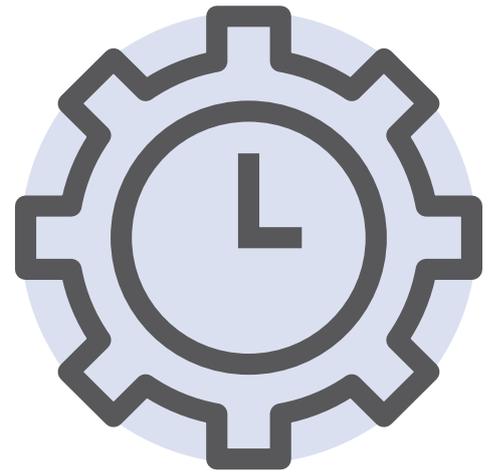
Fill out your ‘About’ section and add group milestones... This is where new visitors tend to go when deciding whether to engage with you and/or Like your Page. You might add a general description of your group, your mission statement, or your story – with brief, yet descriptive wording. You might also want to record milestones and awards – like when you launched a specific project or service – as well as the day/year your group was founded, or when you hosted major events.

When to post

Decide how often to post... If you do not post frequently enough, you will not look as reliable, but post too often and people might feel bombarded. Try to find what works for your group. You can do this by increasing the frequency of posts and seeing whether engagement grows or starts to drop off. If it is dropping off, this might be a sign that your audience is over-saturated. You could also conduct a Facebook poll and ask your audience directly!

Decide when to post for maximum impact... Getting the timing of your posts right is key to increasing your reach. According to Hootsuite, “The best time to post on Facebook is between **12 p.m. and 3 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday** and on **Saturday and Sunday between 12 p.m. and 1 p.m.**”. Experiment and see what works best for your group.

Schedule your posts... If you cannot be around to post at the most popular times, or if you have something that you would like to go out at a specific date and time, then the Facebook Page interface can help. Create your post as normal, then click the arrow next to the “Publish” button and click “Schedule Post”.



How Often to Post

Minimum: Once a week

Better: 3 times a week

Optimal: Once a day

Avoid: Sharing a bunch of posts in quick succession. Allow at least three hours between posts. “Too many updates” is the no.1 reason people unfollow group or organisation pages.

Features of your Facebook page

Post photos and videos to your Timeline... Visual content has become a must-have for any social media presence, and it is 40 times more likely to get shared than any other type of content. Photos and graphics are a great way to capture a moment or share information in a more visually friendly way, but videos are becoming the new focus for audiences on social media.

Explore using Facebook Live... According to Facebook’s newsroom, people spend more than three times longer watching a Facebook Live video compared to a video that is no longer live. So, do not be afraid to give viewers an in-the-moment look at what your group does, but do make sure you are prepared! Ask your audience to ask questions live that you can answer in the video.

Pin important posts to the top of your Page... When you post new content to your Facebook Page, older posts get pushed farther down your Timeline. Facebook offers the ability to “pin” one post at a time to the top of your Page.

Use this function to promote things like new projects, upcoming events, or important announcements. To pin a post, click on the drop-down arrow in the top-right corner of a post on your Page, and click ‘Pin to Top’.

Add a call-to-action (CTA) button... This is a handy feature, which can be customised to direct people to your website, sign them up to your newsletter, or even book a place on an upcoming event. To add a CTA button to your Page, click the blue “Add a Button” box.

Engaging with your Facebook audience

Directly engaging with your audience... If you want your community to be able to privately message you through your Page, then you need to enable the messages feature. You can do this by going to your settings, clicking on “General” on the left-hand column, and then looking for “Messages” on the list of results. Enabling this makes it easier to reach out to you, but

only do this if you will have the time to monitor and respond to people! Facebook enables users to see how responsive groups are to messages, so people can see if this is slow.

Do not forget about comments... You can monitor and respond to comments via the 'Notifications' tab at the very top of your Page. It may not be necessary to respond to every comment, but you should monitor the conversations happening on your Page, particularly any abuse or inflammatory comments.

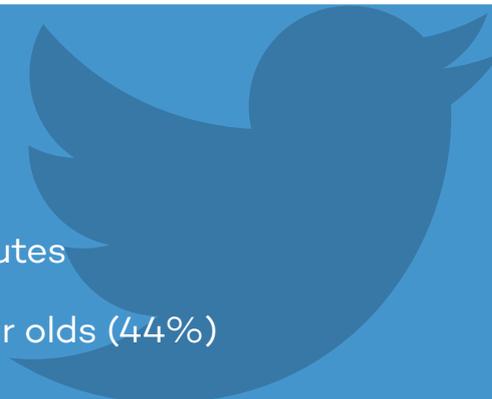
Facebook Insights

Measure the success of your Facebook efforts... Your Page comes with a range of built-in tools which allow you to track engagement metrics. These can be found under the "Insights" tab at the left-hand side of your screen.

In Insights, you can analyse things like; Page views and likes, post reach and engagements, and the demographics of your Page audience (such as age, location, and gender). These tools can be used to help you modify your Facebook content strategy, to publish more of what works, and less of what does not.

TWITTER

- Monthly users: 353 million^[7]
- Time spent per session: 4 minutes
- Largest age group: 30-49 year olds (44%)



Twitter’s largest age group is older than Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, with almost half of users aged 30-49.

What is it used for?

Twitter is used as a place to ‘gather quick news’ and discuss events. This makes it a “a prime place to share content and drive discussions”.^[8]

When to post

Hootsuite suggest that the best time to post on Twitter is **8:00 AM on Mondays and Thursdays**. Mornings are best for tweeting, as this is when people tend to be “getting started on their day”, catching up on articles, and scrolling social media for news”.^[9] The most-followed Twitter accounts averaged 23 tweets a day, with no decline in followers as tweet counts increased.

How Often to Post

Minimum: Once a day

Better: 3-6 tweets a day

Optimal: 15-23 tweets a day

Avoid: Disappearing from Twitter for weeks or months – you will lose followers.

Setting up your Twitter Bio

What is a Twitter bio? Twitter bios are where your group gets “to introduce itself, offer an elevator pitch, and set the mood—all in 160 characters”.^[10]

Creating a good Twitter Bio... Your Bio matters, so introduce yourself and take the space. Hootsuite suggests that the more characters you use, **the more followers you are likely to gain.**^[11] But be wary of fitting in too much, you want your Bio to stand out.

Think carefully about tone and language... what is essential to say about your group? Can you make it catchy and fun? Twitter Bios are searchable so using ‘keywords’ may attract new followers.^[12]

Use your Twitter Bio as a ‘call-to-action’... for example through a hashtag, or link to your website, campaign, or fundraiser. If you plan to include a link in your Bio, make sure to save space with a URL shortener.^[13]



Find inspiration... look at successful Twitter Bios and what similar groups have written.

Hootsuite offers more hints and tips here: bit.ly/3gjikkN

Twitter features

Pinned tweets... If you have said something important and do not want it to disappear into your feed as you post other Tweets, you can pin a Tweet to your profile. That way it will always stay at the top and be the first thing visitors to your profile see.

Use graphics to make your posts more engaging... Twitter enables images and GIFS in your Tweets. As with Facebook, posts that include a visual element are more likely to get people's attention. One tip is that you can tag up to 10 other users in a photo. This is a great space saver when characters are limited, and makes your Tweet look neater as the mentions are effectively hidden. Please note that you cannot tag other users in a GIF.

You can now use video on Twitter too... You can record up to 2 minutes and 20 seconds of video and it does not count towards the 280-character limit in a Tweet.

Hashtags 101

What is a hashtag? A hashtag is a phrase or keyword that is preceded by a (#) symbol and used to create a thread of conversations around a specific theme or topic. The purpose of the hashtag is to categorise topics, bring ideas together, inspire exchange and encourage others to join in. It is great for campaigns where you want everyone to share a single message, such as #LGBTResilience

HOW TO USE HASHTAGS

- Check what hashtags are trending and jump on these where you can
- Do not use hundreds of hashtags in each Tweet
- Try to keep the keyword under six characters where possible
- Use capital letters to break up the hashtag and make it easier to read ([#CamelCase](#))
- If you want to create a campaign with a unique hashtag, you can check whether it has been used before by searching it on Twitter
- Keep a diary of Twitter days that are relevant to your group and prepare content for these in advance. This can be a great way to redirect people to your website and events e.g., to a blog you have written for [#MentalHealthAwarenessDay](#) or for [#LesbianVisibilityWeek](#).

Engaging with your Twitter audience

Do not just broadcast, converse... Posting your own content is just one element of Twitter. Engaging in conversations, asking questions, and creating Twitter Polls can be great ways of having more impact.^[14]

To Reply or to Mention? When a message begins with a @username and is then followed by the post itself, it is a **Reply**. A Reply is a direct Tweet to another user, and it appears on your and the other person's feed. Replies can only be seen by the person you replied to and the people following both of you. If the @username appears at any other part of the post, it is a **Mention**. Use a Mention when you want to reply to what someone has said, but you want this to be seen by more people. For example:



RETWEETING

Retweeting is a great way to share content and get more involved. Make sure you:

- Do not just retweet everything. Read Tweets and conversations that are happening, and only Retweet what is meaningful to you and your group
- 'Curate' content so that it is in line with your group's guidelines and style, and includes your own thoughts and feelings
- Use Quote Tweets to start a conversation or put your own spin on a Retweet.

Twitter Analytics

The 'Tweet Analytics' feature is available both via the web browser and Twitter apps for original tweets you have sent. Analytics lets you know each month how many impressions, profile visits, mentions and new followers you got, as well as your top Tweets, followers and mentions.

To view your group's Twitter Analytics via a browser, click on 'More' on the left-hand side of your screen, and then 'Analytics'.

TweetReach is a free, independent insight tool for Twitter that delivers accurate results. You can search an account, hashtag or keywords and it will generate a report (snapshot) for you. This is handy if you want to search for more than just how your own account is doing. tweetreach.com

Hootsuite has a range of real-time analytics available on their free plan, which allow you to track your performance on each social media platform. They offer a range of paid plans, which provide advanced real-time analytics that can be accessed by differing numbers of team members at the same time, based on the plan you choose. hootsuite.com

TIKTOK

- Monthly active users: 689 million^[15]
- Largest age group: 18-24 year olds^[16]
- Time spent per day: 45+ minutes^[17]



TikTok is one of the best social media platforms to reach younger LGBTI people, and one of the fastest growing. HootSuite describes TikTok as “a bite-size version of YouTube, with videos ranging between five and 60 seconds in length. Creators have access to an assortment of filters and effects, as well as a massive music library”.^[18]

What can groups use TikTok for?

TikTok can be used by groups to raise awareness and engage audiences. TikTok’s focus is on positive content, with successful videos tending to be original, funny, and relatable. This makes it a great platform for “empowering and engaging campaigns that allow people to feel a sense of involvement”.^[19]

The TikTok for Good initiative – [tiktok.com/forgood](https://www.tiktok.com/forgood) – helps charities launch “Hashtag Challenges” where users create content to show support for a cause. This can help charities grow their audience and awareness around particular issues.

Content creation

If your group is largely made up of young people, or this is who you want to target, then TikTok is worth considering. **Try involving young people or getting them to lead on your content creation**, otherwise videos could end up off the mark.^[20]

TikTok’s unique algorithm is a huge part of why the platform has become so successful, so quickly. This algorithm generates a feed for each user related to their interests. This means that **LGBTI groups and charities stand a good chance of having an audience on TikTok**. There are many ‘sides’ of TikTok (distinct communities), and this includes ‘gay TikTok’, ‘Lesbian TikTok’, ‘Bisexual TikTok’ and ‘Alt TikTok’.^[21]

Keep it simple, keep it interesting... TikTok prides itself on relatable and genuine content, in contrast to other platforms, so creating raw and ‘human’ videos about LGBTI lives and causes does well. “Simple explainer videos with text added in-app can go viral – you just have to post what people are interested in”.

TikTok features



TikTok’s in-app editing tools are easy to use for beginners and bypass the need for computer editing software”.^[22]

For simple tips on how to record and edit a video go here:

bit.ly/3x2IJKq



For more examples of how charities are using TikTok, go here:

bit.ly/3wbJUar

How Often to Post

Minimum: One post a week

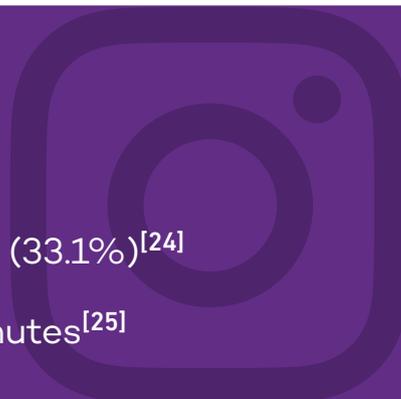
Better: 3 posts per week

Optimal: 1-3 posts per day

Avoid: Disappearing for weeks or months.

INSTAGRAM

- Monthly active users: 1.22 billion^[23]
- Largest age group: 25-34 year olds (33.1%)^[24]
- Average time spent per day: 29 minutes^[25]



Instagram is owned by Facebook, but it attracts a greater percentage of younger users than its owners. Tik Tok recently surpassed Instagram as the ‘teen’s preferred platform’, but Instagram continues to compete with this and Snapchat.^[26]

If you are just **getting started** with Instagram, this helpful how-to guide can show you the ropes: bit.ly/3v1v9Wk



What is Instagram for?

Instagram is built almost entirely around visual content, and it is one of the best platforms for sharing photos and videos.

Creating a good Instagram Bio

Your Instagram Bio is the description that sits under your username. This can be up to 150 characters and is your opportunity to explain what your group is and what it does. Use your Bio as a ‘call-to-action’ linking people to your other social media platforms, for example, your Facebook Page or group. Regularly check and update both your Bio and profile picture to make sure these are still relevant and engaging.

Using hashtags

Hashtags are often how people find content on Instagram, so using them is likely to get you noticed, just make sure that the hashtag fits the content well.^[27] As with Twitter, be selective with your hashtags, only using those which are most relevant.

Followers 101

Aim to have more followers than people you follow... The real trick behind this is to have great content that people want to see, simple as that. Consistent, high-quality, and well curated stories are key. You can find new people to follow using the 'suggested for you' section of Instagram, or by searching for other organisations and groups.

Interact with your followers... As with Twitter, Instagram is not just about broadcasting. Consider using the 1-2-3 rule to get involved in the Instagram community. This means for every 1 photo you post, comment on 2, and like 3.^[28]

If you have active followers who regularly like and comment on your photos, let them know you value them by replying, and even liking a few photos on their account. You can also 'pin' your favourite comments from other users.

You can tag Instagram users featured in your photos with an @-mention in your caption, or by using Instagram's tagging functionality within the post.^[29] This means they will get a notification about your post and may be more likely to engage with it.

Tagging your location in photos / stories can help find local followers and grow your community.

Content creation

Instagram is all about visual content, so pick your photos wisely. Ask yourself, *who is my target audience and what do they want to see? Which of my photos has got most attention and why?*

Instagram Stories... these are photos and videos that vanish after 24 hours. Creating regular stories is a good way to get more followers. Stories offer a range of features that give your followers an opportunity to interact with you, for example, via polls, questions, and chat stickers.

Hootsuite provide 32 hacks for engaging and stand out Instagram stories, go to bit.ly/3znu1zV



Instagram highlights... stories disappear, but highlights do not. You can pick your best stories to become your highlights. Think about this as presenting a snapshot of what your group is all about. Pick your pinned stories carefully, this is what followers see when they visit your profile. A few well curated stories are far better than 100s of random ones.

Caption tips

Instagram allows captions to be up to 2,200 words, which is a lot! This means if you want to tell a story you can, though you may not want to provide your audience with an essay every time. Try to put the most important words at the beginning of your caption, this is what people will see before clicking to see more. You could use a question as your caption to start a conversation in the comments.

When to post

As with every social media platform, it is a good idea to spread out your posts on Instagram, rather than post lots at one time, then nothing for weeks. Consider preparing what you will post, and when, using your social media content calendar (as explained earlier). As with Twitter, getting the balance right is key – post multiple times a day and your followers could be overwhelmed by content, but post very irregularly, and you may lose followers over time.

The best time to post on Instagram is **11:00 AM on Wednesdays**^[30], and generally weekday mornings.

How Often to Post

Minimum: Once a week

Better: 3 times a week

Optimal: Once or twice a day

Avoid: Sharing a bunch of posts in quick succession or disappearing for weeks at a time.

Instagram Insights

Instagram has analytics tools available, including data on impressions for each post, reach, engagement, and top posts. You can find demographic information about your followers, such as gender, age, and location.

Test, Evaluate, and Adjust

Understanding your social media is all about testing new ideas and monitoring their success. As your social media grows, and your plan progresses, try to understand when your audiences tend to be online and why they engage with posts.

Look at your most successful posts and work out why this was the case, was it the time of day, the content, the graphics or something else?

There are various social media tools that can help you schedule posts, see analytical data, and engage across multiple social media accounts. Have a look at tools like tweetdeck, Hootsuite and Loomly to see what is on offer.

Making Social Media More Accessible

Making social media more inclusive is easier than we think and means appealing to the broadest audience. If our social media content is inaccessible, then we risk losing sections of our community, usually without realising. “Excluded web visitors often don’t complain: 71% just leave”.^[31]

Inaccessible content can have a hugely negative impact on people with disabilities, leading to feelings of alienation and dismissal:

“It is another way the world communicates to me that they don’t want me as part of it”.^[32]

But small changes can make a big difference, particularly to those with hearing or visual impairments.^[33]

People with disabilities often use tools to interact with social media. Understanding how these work will help you to make your social media more inclusive.^[34] Some of the most used are:

Screen reader software: also known as text-to-speech, these programmes read web pages out loud, from text to emojis and images with descriptive text.

Braille displays: like screen reader software, these tools take what is on a web page, and display it on a piece of equipment that uses tiny retractable dots to display braille. Braille displays are vital communication tools for those with multi-sensory impairments, like people who are deafblind.

Magnifying tools: these help people who are partially sighted by blowing up text and images.^[35]

Below are some handy hints and tips to help your online content work for people using these tools. These can become part of your social media strategy, and everyday practice when posting online content.

Accessible language and text

Where you can, **write in plain English** and avoid jargon. This will make your content clearer to everyone, strengthening your message and avoiding misunderstandings. It will make your posts and campaigns accessible to people whose second language is English, and to those with cognitive disabilities.

Avoid using full caps as this can be visually distracting, ‘shouty’ and can be misinterpreted by screen readers.^[36] Some assistive technologies will also read out every single letter of a word if it is in full caps.^[37]

Use an adequate font size and make sure text is legible. Break up big chunks of text. For those with cognitive disabilities, as well as visual impairments, solid text can be too much to read at once.^[38]

Punctuation marks are also read aloud by screen readers. Be mindful of how hashtags or @ mentions can disrupt copy and consider putting these at the end of your post.^[39]

Avoid special characters and fancy fonts. These reduce legibility, and assistive tools read special formatting very differently.^[40]

Appendix

- ¹ Lucie Renard, Book Widgets (2017), 30 creative ways to use Padlet for teachers and students. Available at: bit.ly/3pZKjdZ
- ² Christina Newberry, Evan LePage, Hootsuite (2021) *How to Create a Social Media Strategy in 8 Easy Steps (Free Template)*. Available at: bit.ly/2U571Fn
- ³ Mind Tools, *SMART Goals*. Available at: bit.ly/3cKyFhl
- ⁴ Facebook Inc. (2021), *Facebook Reports Fourth Quarter and Full Year 2020 Results*. Available at: bit.ly/3iOofBg
- ⁵ Brent Barnhart, Sproutsocial (2021), *Social media demographics to inform your brand's strategy in 2021*. Available at: bit.ly/3vwGjmd
- ⁶ Maryam Mohsin, Oberlo (2021), *10 Facebook Statistics*. Available at: bit.ly/3d9gqT9
- ⁷ Paige Cooper, Hootsuite (2021), *All the Social Media Apps You Should Know in 2021*. Available at: bit.ly/2U2ORUE
- ⁸ Brent Barnhart, Sproutsocial (2021), *Social media demographics to inform your brand's strategy in 2021*
- ⁹ Paige Cooper, Hootsuite (2021), *The Best Time to Post on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn*. Available at: bit.ly/2SCCOsa
- ¹⁰ Katie Sehl, Hootsuite (2019), *How to Write a Good Twitter Bio: Tips, Ideas, and Examples*. Available at: bit.ly/3vwH5Q9
- ¹¹ Ibid ¹² Ibid ¹³ Ibid
- ¹⁴ Dominique Jackson, Sproutsocial (2018), *26 Twitter Tips for Beginners You'll Wish You Knew Sooner*. Available at: bit.ly/3gG6DVu
- ¹⁵ Paige Cooper, Hootsuite (2021), *All the Social Media Apps You Should Know in 2021*
- ¹⁶ Brent Barnhart, Sproutsocial (2021), *Social media demographics to inform your brand's strategy in 2021*
- ¹⁷ Ibid
- ¹⁸ Katie Sehl, Hootsuite (2020), *Everything Brands Need to Know About TikTok in 2020*. Available at: bit.ly/3qOs8on
- ¹⁹ Aidan Paterson, Charity Digital (2021), *TikTok for Good: how charities can use TikTok to engage audiences*. Available at: bit.ly/3gvnAU0 [Accessed 09/06/2021]
- ²⁰ Amy Johnson, Reason Digital (2020), *TikTok for Charities*. Available at: bit.ly/3zvVQWz
- ²¹ Liz Sommer, StayHipp (2020), *The Sides of TikTok*. Available at: bit.ly/3ztpsUD
- ²² Amy Johnson, Reason Digital (2020), *TikTok for Charities*
- ²³ Paige Cooper, Hootsuite (2021), *All the Social Media Apps You Should Know in 2021*
- ²⁴ Brent Barnhart, Sproutsocial (2021), *Social media demographics to inform your brand's strategy in 2021*
- ²⁵ Ibid ²⁶ Ibid
- ²⁷ Dan Price, Make Use Of (2020), *New to Instagram? 10 Top Tips for Newbies*. Available at: bit.ly/3cKEEnQA
- ²⁸ Ibid

Connecting People Online – A Resource for LGBTI Groups

²⁹ Christina Newberry, Hootsuite, (2021) *How to Get More Followers on Instagram (the Real Way)*. Available at: bit.ly/3clxKyq

³⁰ Paige Cooper, Hootsuite (2021), *The Best Time to Post on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn*

³¹ Katie Sehl, Hootsuite (2020), *Inclusive Design for Social Media: Tips for Creating Accessible Channels*. Available at: bit.ly/3ztbbHn

³² This information came from a webinar on social media accessibility given by Dr Amy Kavanagh, who runs The Staying Inn.

³³ Sense (2021), *How to make social media accessible to disabled people*. Available at: bit.ly/3gF92j9

³⁴ Ibid ³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Katie Sehl, Hootsuite (2020), *Inclusive Design for Social Media: Tips for Creating Accessible Channels*

³⁷ This information came from a webinar on social media accessibility given by Dr Amy Kavanagh, who runs The Staying Inn.

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Katie Sehl, Hootsuite (2020), *Inclusive Design for Social Media: Tips for Creating Accessible Channels*

⁴⁰ Ibid

Other formats

If you need this document in larger print or another format or language, please contact us on 0131 467 6039 or en@equality-network.org.

This document is available in PDF format on our website: www.equality-network.org



The Equality Network is a national lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) equality and human rights charity in Scotland.

30 Bernard Street
Edinburgh EH6 6PR
Telephone: +44 (0) 131 467 6039

www.equality-network.org
Email: en@equality-network.org

 **LGBTIScotland**

 **equalitynetwork**

 **LGBTIScotland**

Registered Scottish Charity: SC037852
Company limited by guarantee: SC220213

Published: August 2021