



Organising a Talk/together event: Toolkit

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Organising a Talk/together event

/Together is a new coalition that invites us all to help build a kinder, closer and more connected society, at a local and national level, and in the aftermath of COVID-19. It is a coalition that anyone can join, from community groups to the UK's best-known organisations.

/Together includes representatives from our major faiths; from the worlds of culture, the media and business; from charities and from sport. We have also built a strong group of experts, which includes organisations working with migrants and refugees, on inter-faith relations, inter-generational connection, loneliness, online civility and other areas relevant to healing social divisions. You can find out more about who is involved and who is supporting **/Together** on our website www.together.org.uk.

On 5th July, the birthday of the NHS, over 14 million people across the UK came together in a shared moment of thanks to those who had helped them through the crisis. **/Together** believes that moments like these, when we come together to focus on what we have in common, are an important part of achieving our aims of a kinder and more connected society. Now we want to find out how we can do more of this.

The **Talk/together** project is a national conversation that everyone can be part of - about what unites and divides us, and how we can help reconnect with each other. We want to find out whether the COVID-19 crisis has helped bring us closer together – and how we keep hold of that new community spirit into the future.

Our aim is for **Talk/together** to be the biggest public consultation since the census. Its findings, to be published in January 2021, will shape the direction of the **/Together** coalition's future activities to promote social connection and bridge divides; they will also provide authoritative evidence on which to advocate for policy change.

Over the next months we are encouraging members of the public to complete an **open, online survey**, as well organising discussions across all the regions and nations of the UK. We have had to adapt our plans in response to public health guidance, so our discussions are taking place outdoors or online. An open call for evidence and further nationally-representative research will also feed into the **Talk/together** project.

Talk/together would also like to invite organisations and individuals to be part of the conversation by organising their own **Talk/together** events and sharing their findings. This is an important way to listen to those voices that are less often heard. We have set aside a 'community chest' that will enable us to cover the costs incurred by small organisations that want to organise their own events. This toolkit will help you organise such an event. It contains:

- Ideas for events and discussions
- Questions you might wish to consider
- Practical considerations for organising an event or discussion
- Information about the community chest
- How to submit what you found to Talk/together
- A consent form for photographs and filming template

If you have any questions about the information in this document, please get in touch with talktogether@together.org.uk where one of the team will be happy to assist.

Ideas for events and discussions

Talk/together wants to find out what divides us and what unities us, as well as the policy changes and practical actions that are needed to build a kinder and more connected society. In 'normal' times we would have encouraged you to organise meetings to discuss these questions, bringing people together from different parts of town. The COVID-19 crisis has sadly restricted what we can do, but it is still possible to organise events and discussions that look at these questions and that keep people safe. You will have plenty of your own ideas, but to start you thinking we have some suggestions.

1. You could ask people to fill in the **Talk/together** open survey at <https://together.org.uk> using your phone or tablet, outdoors in the high street, or in other public spaces such as the local park. The survey could be the basis for starting up a conversation about social connection, or letting people know about local initiatives that bring people together. Remember to observe the two-metre social distance rule.

2. Organise an online discussion. You might want to open this to the public, or make it an invitation-only event. If you are a from a church, you could pair up with a mosque, or a church or chapel in another part of town. A school class could link up with another class in a different school. Online platforms such as Zoom have 'breakout room' functions, so if you want to open up the event to a lot of people, you can move into small groups for part of your discussion.

3. Hold a socially-distanced discussion outdoors. Your local park is an obvious place to hold such an event, particularly if it has a **bandstand** which could provide cover in case of rain. There is a symbolic value in holding such an event in a bandstand, as these structures were originally put up to bring people together and promote community activities.

4. Make a short film about your discussion, or about a project or initiative that has been successful in bringing communities together. We are keen to hear from a wide range of voices across UK society and also to share best practice in bringing people together.

5. We are issuing an open call for evidence so that organisations and individuals can share their own research findings and best practice with **Talk/together**. You can submit your evidence by email to talktogether@together.org.uk or see the together website <https://together.org.uk/talk-together/> for more details of the call for evidence.

Questions you might want to consider in a discussion

If you are holding a discussion, it is worth putting thought into the questions you want to ask, as well as timings. Many people who organise such activities prepare a discussion guide, which sets out the questions they will pose and how long they plan to spend on each question. We recommend that you prepare a such a guide, but it need not be elaborate. You will also need to assign responsibility for meeting and greeting people and chairing the discussion.

Greetings and welcome

If you are holding an event outdoors, you can greet people and offer them refreshments. This is important, as it helps people feel relaxed and makes the atmosphere feel welcoming. You can't offer online refreshments, but you can still greet people as they join the meeting, and take the opportunity to chat.

Housekeeping

It is worth starting off any meeting by introducing the organisers, then setting out 'housekeeping rules'. Items that you might want to mention in housekeeping are:

- How long the meeting will last and the structure of the event.
- Respecting social distancing rules if you are holding the discussion outdoors.
- Ground rules for discussions, such as speaking through the chair, respect for different views, giving everyone the chance to have their say and being mindful of others who may wish to speak.
- An explanation of how discussions work on platforms such as Zoom.
- Whether people are happy to have their photographs taken if you are holding your event outdoors
- What you intend to do with your findings.

In order to promote an open discussion, you might want to hold your meeting under Chatham House Rules. This means that people can talk publicly about what has been discussed at the meeting, but not attribute particular views or opinions to named people.

We also suggest that you let people know about the /together coalition, providing participants with the website address <https://together.org.uk> and encouraging them to fill in the survey.

Introductions

In a good discussion, participants feel comfortable right away, so having a round of introductions can help people feel relaxed and make the environment friendlier. This is particularly important when we are discussing subjects such as social division.

We recommend that people introduce themselves by name before the main discussion starts. You might also want to incorporate a short (five minute) ice-breaker, for example, asking people to give their name alongside three words that describe themselves. Other good ice-breakers are getting people to state the best thing that happened to them last week or say how they got their first name.

Questions to consider

You will need to think about some open-ended questions to prompt debate. The focus of Talk/together is what divides us and what can unite us and bring us together. Here are some questions you might use to prompt a debate.

What divides us?

One to ten questions are a good way of starting a discussion. You can also prompt people or ask follow-up questions.

- *On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is very divided and 10 is very united, how divided do you think your local community is at present? “And what about the country as a whole?” Why did you give that score?*
- *What type of social divisions worry you most and why?”*
- *Do you feel that we are a more divided society than we were in the past? Why?*
- *What about coronavirus – do you feel that this has made us more united or divided?*

What brings us together and unites us?

Here are some ideas to get the conversation going.

- *What does the phrase ‘bring us together’ mean to you? How does it make you feel?*
- *Do you think it is important that we get a chance to get to know people from different backgrounds to ourselves, or who hold political views that are different to our own?*
- *What helps bridge some of the social divides we have talked about? What brings us together, both in our local communities, and across the UK? (You could prompt people here if most of the focus of the discussion is on UK-wide things, or if the conversation largely focuses on the local.)*
- *How can we keep hold of the community spirit that was so strong at the start of the COVID-19 crisis?*
- *How can we make sure that people who are new to the UK or new to their local areas are welcomed to their new communities?*
- *Can our national identities – British, English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish - unite us, irrespective of where we are from or our backgrounds?*

What policy change and practical action do we need to bring us together

It would be good to brainstorm the policy changes and practical action that participants think would help heal divides and build a more connected society. We have some questions that you might like to use as prompts:

- *Whose responsibility is it to heal social divisions and bring people together?*
- *What do you think business and employers should be doing to bridge social divides and bring people together?*
- *What about schools and colleges? And local councils?*
- *How can we make sure that social media is used for good, rather than being something that increases division?*
- *Can volunteering bring people together? If so, what needs to change to make this happen?*

- *The Canadians have Canada Day which aims to bring people together. Should we have such a day in this country? If it is to achieve the aim of increasing social connection, what activities should take place on this day? What should we call the day and what time of year should we hold it?*

Wrap-up

It is always good to have a final question to which everyone is invited to give an answer. The question below works well.

- *If there was one thing that should be done to help heal this country's divisions and unite us, what would that be? I am going to go round and ask each of you to say one thing in turn.*

At the end of the discussion you might want to summarise the themes that have been raised. If you have held an outdoor discussion you might want to take some photographs or get video clips of people speaking to camera. You might also let participants know about the /together coalition and about sending in your findings. It would be appreciated if you could get everyone who took part to take the online survey and to share it with friends and family.

Practical considerations

There are a number of things you should consider when you are organising your event.

1. **Who do you want to attend?** This will determine how you publicise your event or if you make it invitation only. We recommend that outdoor events are invitation-only to keep numbers down and enable social distancing.
2. **How many people?** Because of the COVID-19 crisis we recommend that you keep outdoor events small: between six and ten people is an ideal number for a 60-90 minute discussion. You can invite more people to attend an online discussion, but you will need to use breakout room functions, as it is difficult for everyone to have their say in larger gatherings.
3. **Outdoor discussions – check out and chose a venue.** We are encouraging people to use parks and bandstands for outdoor face-to-face events. A database of UK bandstands, with details of how to book them, can be found at www.pavilionsformusic.co.uk. We recommend that you visit the venue in person, to check for accessibility and potential hazards, whether you can space yourselves out and the location of toilets and parking. Although many of these venues are free, most councils require that you pre-book them. It might also be worth letting your local Police Community Support Officer know about your event.
4. **Outdoor events – keeping people safe.** It goes without saying that you will need to make sure that everyone involved in the event is safe, and that you are aware and adhere to the law on this issue. We recommend you carry out a risk assessment to identify what hazards might arise, the impact on your event and how you will minimise them. This need not be a lengthy exercise, but it is important that it is done and that you have documentary evidence that you have done this. Check for trip hazards, making sure that your seating is safe, and be COVID-19 alert!
5. **Outdoor events – insurance and image consent forms.** If you are organising your discussion on behalf of an organisation, you should already have public liability insurance that will cover your event. Many councils require that you have such insurance as a pre-requisite for booking a bandstand. If you don't have this, you can get cover for about £60 for a small event (www.event-insurance.co.uk is one website you can check out). Do apply for it in advance. An alternative is to get everyone who attends to sign a 'waiver of liability' form to say they are attending at their own risk. We have given an example of a waiver of liability form in this toolkit. If you intend to take people's photos or film them, please get their signed consent. We have also included a sample image consent form in this pack.
6. **Outdoor discussions – what you need to bring.** You will need to bring deckchairs or borrow some folding chairs (community halls will sometimes lend you folding chairs). You could also take some umbrellas. A first aid box, hand sanitiser and a small supply of pens, paper and some refreshments are useful, but remember that the virus can be transmitted on our hands. We recommend buying small bottles of water and fruit juice for each of the participants.
7. **Outdoor discussions – COVID-19 safety.** It is recommended that you wipe down any hard surfaces or chairs with cleaning fluid. You should take hand sanitiser with you and a small supply of disposable masks. Space out the chairs and remind people to use the hand gel and keep two metres apart.

8. **Offline discussions – track and trace.** It is advisable to take the contact details of attendees at your event for track and trace purposes. Doing so may be required by the council before they grant permission for an event. You will need to keep people's details securely and delete them after a period of time.
9. **Online discussions - Is everyone comfortable using the online platform you decide to use?** Some people are not confident users of Zoom or other videoconferencing platforms, particularly people who don't use these platforms at work. It might be worth calling people beforehand to talk them through the details of installing it and using it.
10. **Online and offline - respect people's rights to privacy.** Please don't pass on people's email addresses, names or images without their permission.

Information about the community chest

To help smaller organisations and individuals to run events, we have set aside a small community chest to cover expenses. These might include:

- An upgrade to Zoom for a month, to enable you to hold an online discussion.
- Charges for booking a bandstand or other location.
- Hiring folding chairs.
- Public liability insurance.
- Hand sanitiser and cleaning material for outdoor discussions.
- Refreshments for an outdoor discussion.

If this would help you run your event, please let us know by email at talktogether@together.org.uk. All we need to know are brief details about the event, what you intend to use the money for and in which part of the UK you live. We will also need you to give us your bank details, the name on the account, the account number and sort code.

Our overall pot of money is fixed, so we will allocate money on a first come, first served basis, for each region and nation of the UK.

How to submit what you found to Talk/Together

Our findings from Talk/Together will be used to write a final report which we plan to publish early in 2021. We would encourage you to write up what you found out and submit it to us. We don't need you to write a report, but it would be good to have a summary of what you found out. We would like to know:

- What do you think divides us?
- What brings us together and unites us?
- What policy change and practical action do we need to bring us together?

We would also like to know how many people took part in your discussion or event, as we are keeping a total of all those who participated in Talk/Together.

You can submit your findings to talktogether@together.org.uk.

We would also welcome short films and photographs that we can use on social media. You can send them to us through WeTransfer (again to talktogether@together.org.uk) Alternatively you can share the films and photographs with us on social media: Twitter: [@togethercoalit](https://twitter.com/togethercoalit); Facebook and Instagram: [@togethercoalition](https://www.facebook.com/togethercoalition).

Waiver of liability template

Liability waiver form template (England and Wales version. You will need to amend the form if you are organising your event in Northern Ireland or Scotland)

I XXXXX wish to participate in the activities (collectively hereafter called “the Activities”) organised by XXXX

I am eighteen years or older.

In signing this waiver, I accept and assume all of the risks which exist in the discussion. I also confirm that I choose to participate being fully aware of these risks, and that my participation is voluntary.

I agree that I will undertake the Activities in accordance with the safety rules and advice that I receive along with any oral instructions or advice given to me prior to or during the session.

I acknowledge that I am responsible for my own safety (and the safety of my possessions) whilst undertaking the Activities.

I expressly agree and promise to accept responsibility for any and all risks existing and subsisting in any of the activities and acknowledge that my participation in the activity is voluntary.

As a result of participating I agree to accept any consequences except liability for death or personal injury caused by XXXX negligence and/or breach of statutory duty.

This waiver will be governed by in accordance with English law and any disputes relating to it shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of England.

I acknowledge that I have read, fully understood and accepted the above waiver terms and conditions prior to my signing below.

Signed:

Print name:

Address:

Date:

Contact (email or phone, optional):

Image consent form

I, the undersigned, give my permission for XXXX to securely save my image and story and to publish or broadcast them in local, national or international media (print, online and broadcast), online and on social media.

Signed:

Print name:

Address:

Date:

Contact (email or phone, optional):

Name of person collecting this consent/ interview:

If the individual is under 18 years of age (16 in Scotland) a parent or legal guardian should also sign:

Parent/guardian signature:

Name:

Date:

Telephone: