

Peace Hub Annual Report 2021



In 2021 Peace Hub continued to respond to challenging times, supporting the existing movements for peace and social justice during the lockdown, then reaching out to help build the movement as restrictions eased. COP26, the Together With Refugees campaign, and responding to economic inequality all provided focal points to bring individuals and organisations together. We also recognised the importance of supporting each other's mental wellbeing during these difficult times.

Photo: our coordinator joins the relay to COP26 as it passes through Birmingham.

41 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AF

Tel: 0121 238 2869

Email: office@peacehub.org.uk

Website: peacehub.org.uk

Peace Hub is a branch of The Central England Area Quaker Meeting Charities, registered charity number 224571.

About Peace Hub

What is Peace Hub?

Peace Hub is a friendly, café-style space in central Birmingham, focussed on peace & justice. It is a semi-autonomous branch of Central England Quakers, or CEQ, (registered charity number 224571), with its own management committee, budget and bank account. The building is owned by CEQ, with the top two floors sub-let to Peacemakers (West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project).

The organisation acts as a Hub for peace & social justice activity in the city, connecting members of the public, activists, faith groups and NGOs with each other, via three main strands:

1. Normally, our drop-in space is open to the public three days a week, to spread awareness and encourage action around a series of peace & justice themes. In early 2021 much of this work moved online.
2. We offer office support and expertise to voluntary and faith groups working for peace & social justice, to multiply their impact.
3. We work with local and national NGOs to deliver joint workshops and engage a wider audience in campaigns for peace & social justice.

Peace Hub aims to engage members of the public of all faiths and none. As a Quaker organisation our commitment to peace & social justice (and the various themes) springs from our faith, and we are happy to discuss this with any of our visitors who are interested.

Vision Statement

As Quakers we are called to act for Peace and Justice. Peace Hub seeks to provide a centre from which an inclusive community is inspired to take up this call.

We aim for Peace Hub to become a Quaker-led service to the public that people of all faiths and none in Birmingham and the Midlands are glad to have. We hope that Peace Hub will become a place to which people naturally come when wanting to act for peace and justice, and provide a base for networks of peace-makers.

Aim & Objectives

Aim: A centre from which a diverse community in Central England is inspired to act for peace and justice.

Objectives:

We seek to meet this aim using a rolling programme of peace and justice themes, through which we:

- Inform the public on a wide range of peace and justice issues
- Stimulate dialogue with the local community about peace and justice
- Offer hope through positive examples of peace-making and justice-building
- Encourage people to act for peace by
 - Advocating for local, national and international structures that support peace and justice - as Quakers say: 'speaking truth to power'
 - Showing solidarity with peace-makers and justice-builders

We further support our aim through ongoing activities:

- Supporting community & interfaith cohesion
- Encouraging people to make peace in their own lives
- Upholding activists and groups working for peace and justice
- Explaining why Quakers as a community are called to act for peace and justice

Work & Witness at the Hub

One of Peace Hub's core strands of work uses a rolling programme of peace and social justice themes to engage the public and encourage them to take action. For the duration of each theme, there is a display at the Hub highlighting relevant information and posing stimulating questions, along with a simple action that people can take part in, as well as corresponding articles on our website and social media. For the first part of the year, we had to work entirely in the online space, and the term 'visitors' below refers to online visitors to our website, social media accounts and Zoom events, as well as in-person visitors during the periods that we could safely open. From May when we were able to reopen, our coordinator had friendly conversations with those who dropped in about the theme and how people can get involved.

In 2021 we fully adopted our new strapline: **Encouraging Action for Peace**, including displaying this on our revamped shop sign, and sharing through our online presence. We adopted this new subheading, replacing 'Quaker Peace & Justice Centre' for three reasons:



The new sign in place

1. To highlight the action that takes place at the Hub, rather than describe the building;
2. To make it clear that everyone is welcome, not just Quakers. There is still the Quaker 'Q' on our sign, and we are happy to let people know about Quakers, but action for peace is our core concern;
3. To avoid confusion between social justice and criminal justice, particularly given our proximity to Birmingham's courts. We continue to talk about 'peace and social justice' in our materials and conversations, where there is more space to provide context.

We ran four peace & social justice themes in 2021, making connections between all of them under our new strapline:

A Burning Issue – kept focus on the ongoing climate crisis, and set the scene for action around COP26 later in the year. We continued to work with Friends of the Earth, Footsteps, Jai Jagat and Climate Action Network West Midlands to promote alternatives to incinerating Birmingham's general waste. Online visitors to the Hub also showed solidarity with the Fridays for Future school strikes, which had been forced to move onto social media during this period.

Speak, Listen, Change – explored how we could support each other's mental health and wellbeing, as England came out of lockdown. Taking in Mental Health Awareness Week, we built on previous material from Time to Change about holding positive conversations about mental health, and sharing tips to maintain wellbeing. A lot has been done to raise awareness in recent years, and organisations such as Mind are shifting focus towards systemic change; visitors to the Hub supported Mind's campaign for a mental health spokesperson as part of the government's covid recovery programme.

Think Global, Act Local, Get Equal – highlighted the Build Back Better campaign, aiming to use the recovery from the pandemic to make our economic system fairer and more equitable (by this stage the government had adopted the words, but not the spirit of the campaign). Visitors to the Hub supported New Economics Foundation's campaign for a Living Income, and shared their ideas on what it would mean to have basic economic security for everyone.

Who We Are – connected with the Together With Refugees coalition to challenge the Nationalities and Borders Bill.

Visitors to the Hub crafted orange hearts to show solidarity with people seeking safety in the UK – connecting with the messaging developed by refugees themselves.

In collaboration with Birmingham City of Sanctuary we helped create materials to encourage people to write to MPs, calling for amendments to remove some of the more inhumane parts of the bill.

Partnerships & Reaching Out

Junior Peacemakers



During the pandemic, Junior Peacemakers workshops at the Hub had to be stopped, as running these with sufficient social distancing and bubbling measures was impossible. However, we have developed a new model of running Junior Peacemakers in schools, working with a whole year-group at a time. Although this changes the dynamic of the workshops, it has allowed us to work directly with a much larger group of children, reaching over 580 children across 8 schools.

The sessions have always blended personal & interpersonal peace skills with critical thinking about peace & justice issues in the world.

After the lockdowns, children needed to readjust to working in school alongside their peers, so for 2021 the balance shifted a little towards the former. However, we still engaged children in thinking about climate justice (see photo) and mental wellbeing, linking in with two of our themes for the year.

Footsteps (Faiths for a Low Carbon Future)

The interfaith climate network held several outdoor events on faith and the environment, for which we helped to organise and promote. As restrictions eased these provided a welcome opportunity for participants to share our passion for the cause as well as to reconnect with nature, with over 50 people joining in total. Combined with online events connected to the international Greenfaith organisation, this helped to network the movement in the build up to the COP26 UN climate summit which was the focus of much climate activism in 2021.

Build Back Better, Jai Jagat and the Loving Earth Poetry & Textiles projects

Our coordinator joined the Build Back Better programme run by Quaker Peace and Social Witness, connecting with Quakers across Britain working to use the recovery from the pandemic as an opportunity for positive change. We shared skills for developing activist movements and bringing in new people. COP26 was a major concern for many, and became a focus for the autumn.

Building on connections made with young people via Earth Day in 2020, we worked with Jai Jagat to share young people's views on the climate emergency in the lead-up to COP26. Jai Jagat facilitated a poetry workshop, with the resulting poems made available at the Hub. The workshop used the Quaker Loving Earth Textile project as a stimulus, and a selection of textiles conveying people's hopes and fears for the environment were displayed at the Hub in September. The hand-crafted nature of these materials was particularly appealing to passers-by and helped increase visitor numbers in this period.



Loving Earth textiles on display

Young Christian Climate Network

In August, a relay travelling from the G7 summit in Cornwall to COP26 in Glasgow stopped for a week in Birmingham. The relay was organised by Young Christian Climate Network, and brought together a number of faith-based and secular groups concerned about the climate. We helped to facilitate an event sending a message from the relay to Birmingham politicians, and joined events engaging the public, using the prop boat (see front cover) that the relay was bringing with them. In total over 80 people actively joined these events, with many more members of the public stopping by for discussions about what COP26 is, and why it was important.

COP26 Coalition



Our coordinator at the march

The COP26 Coalition brought together a broad range of groups concerned about the climate to organise a march through Birmingham during COP26. At Peace Hub we worked with the coalition to help mobilise people to join the march, particularly focussing on bringing in people outside the usual sphere of activism, and over 3000 people joined on the day. As part of this we worked closely with Footsteps to help welcome people of different faiths to the march, and reassure those for whom this was a new experience that the event would be safe and inclusive. There was a particular focus on climate justice, and an ongoing climate justice coalition has formed out of this work.

Quaker Roots

We supported Quaker Roots to take action against the DSEI arms fair in London, helping to facilitate events hearing from people in Yemen and Columbia affected by the arms trade in the lead-up to the event. Although covid meant that the demonstration was smaller than in 2019, we shared powerful faith-based witness outside the arms fair, that brought the testimony of a Yemeni mother and activist to arms-dealers and campaigners alike.

CEQ Peace Committee and Amnesty International

In the summer, we worked with Central England Quakers Peace Committee to mark the 70th anniversary of the UN Refugee Convention. 45 people joined to explore the relevance of the treaty today, flagging concerns that the Nationalities and Borders Bill could contravene the spirit and letter of this international law. We similarly worked with local Amnesty International groups, helping to host online events hearing from refugee organisations, as part of the regional Festival of Social Justice.

Birmingham City of Sanctuary and Together With Refugees



By the autumn, refugee organisations had brought their concerns about the bill together, under the banner Together With Refugees (TWR). As well as collaborating on the Who We Are theme, we helped Birmingham City of Sanctuary to develop posters (see *image*), leaflets and action cards, using the messaging and orange heart symbol created by TWR.

Stay in Touch

We welcome feedback, suggestions and opportunities for collaboration from our stakeholders.

Please feel free to contact our coordinator, Peter Doubtfire:

Peace Hub 41 Bull St, Birmingham, B4 6AF

office@peacehub.org.uk 0121 238 2869 @QuakerPeaceHub (Facebook & Twitter)

Measuring Impact

580

children joining Junior Peacemakers

350

adults joining partnership events

3000

people joining the COP26 march for climate justice

At the start of the year Peace Hub had to once again close its doors to the public, due to a strict lockdown in England. Most of our work moved online with our website and social media accounts offering information on the themes and how people could get involved. This lockdown was perhaps the toughest period of the pandemic for engagement, as both the sense across society of being ‘all in it together’, and the novelty of online events had worn off. Our focus on the climate emergency at the start of the year helped to build connections with groups and individuals already interested in this area. We particularly made connections through Footsteps, which helped lay the groundwork for action around COP26 later in the year that brought in new people. Our theme on mental wellbeing in the spring was timely as people adjusted to the easing of restrictions and differing approaches to risk.

We were able to reopen in May, with measures in place. Although these meant that the atmosphere of the Hub had to be somewhat sterilised, there was still interest from many of our regulars, who appreciated the opportunity to have a face-to-face conversation. Visitor numbers built up throughout the summer and into the autumn, when more passers-by began to drop in and engage with our themes. The ever-changing tram works on Bull St were a mixed blessing – for periods when trams terminated at the stop opposite the Hub, we had an increased number of walk-in visitors, but at other times the works restricted footfall on the street.



The changing face of Bull St

Our visitor engagement peaked in the autumn, with two themes that chimed with people’s concerns.

Visitors were more aware of inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic, and there was a clear desire to build back better (although there is some cynicism about that wording after its co-option by the government). We helped provide a listening ear to people’s fears and concerns, and opportunities to turn these into action: signposting services that provide practical support, gathering feedback for the Living Income campaign, and making connections to the climate justice work that was building around COP26.

The Together With Refugees campaign provided one of the best experiences of joined-up campaigning that we have been part of. Significant thought had already gone into how best to communicate with the public, using shared wording and imagery across over 400 organisations. This reduced the resources needed to develop materials, and freed up more energy for making connections across groups to boost our collective impact.

We received over 3000 visitors to our website in 2021, the highest numbers since we launched the site in 2015. Our ‘Get Involved’ and ‘Take Action’ pages received the most hits (other than the homepage), and individual posts with links to online actions also ranked highly, indicating that visitors were using the site to get involved in peace work. Twitter and Facebook posts sharing information about our themes and encouraging action were seen 12000 times.

3000

Website visitors

12000

Social media reach

CEQ Peace Hub Accounts for 2021

We would like to thank all our donors (individuals, Quaker Meetings and trusts) whose support allows our work for peace & social justice to happen. Please see the back page for details of how to continue to support this work in 2022.

	£	£
	2021	2020
INCOME		
Peacemakers rent	7,020	7,020
Donations from individuals	3,467	3,218
Donations from Local Meetings/Branches	2,552	3,600
Legacy (Pam Williams)	-	2,834
Grants from Trusts	5,000	4,000
Grants from CEQ Area Meeting	5,000	6,000
Grant from B'ham City Council (COVID-19)	-	2,000
Income from room hire	800	20
Recharges for consultancy work	656	857
TOTAL INCOME	24,495	29,549
EXPENDITURE		
Salary	15,635	15,405
Activities		
Workshops	-	-
Marketing materials & outreach	48	79
Support costs		
Birmingham City Council Rates	293	381
Utilities, cleaning, maintenance	3,368	4,190
Insurance	709	613
Sundry administrative expenses	640	563
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	20,693	21,231
Surplus of income over expenditure	3,802	8,318
Fund balance brought forward 1 Jan	15,102	6,784
Fund balance carried forward 31 Dec	18,904	15,102
BALANCE SHEET		
Debtors	43	-
Cash at Bank	18,861	15,102
NET ASSETS	18,904	15,102

Peace Hub has a reserves policy which specifies a minimum bank balance of £6,500, to provide protection for cash flow and the coordinator's salary.

Due to the postponing of Junior Peacemakers workshops in 2021 due to the pandemic, for which funds had been received and earmarked, and the receipt, in the last quarter of 2021, of Trust grants of £4,000 for work in 2022, we ended 2021 with a bank balance of over £18,000, £12,000 of which can be carried forward to fund our work in 2022, which will include further Junior Peacemakers workshops.

Income from room hire in 2021 included reimbursement for the use of the Hub as a green room whilst filming took place at Priory Rooms, when the buildings were otherwise not in use.

Future Plans

Following two turbulent years, in 2022 we plan to recreate the friendly café-style atmosphere of Peace Hub. Using what we have learned during the pandemic about our need for social connection, and people's appetite to work together as a community, we will seek to engage new audiences in acting for peace and social justice. We will continue to build on the partnerships that have been forged or strengthened over the past year, including around the climate emergency, and work with schools.

Engagement with the public

Covid-restrictions have meant that the Hub has either been closed, or had to adopt a somewhat sterile layout for much of 2020/21. In 2022 we plan to maximise the friendliness and welcoming atmosphere of the Hub, building on changes to our shopfront that were completed this year.

We aim to reach out to people in the city: better understanding the issues that are important to them; and supporting and encouraging people to take action for themselves and their community.

From local peer-support groups to increased awareness and participation in activism for social justice during the pandemic, we have seen that there is a significant appetite for action. However, it can be seen as confusing or inaccessible, and we plan to use our welcoming space to offer friendly, gentle routes to getting involved.

Junior Peacemakers

In 2022, we plan to continue offering Junior Peacemakers workshops in schools, building on what we have learned about how best to balance the aspects of inner peace, interpersonal peace, and critical thinking about global peace, in this setting. There will also be a shift in framing the cost of the workshops from 'free' to 'bursaries available', with an appeal for schools to make a contribution to costs where they can. This is primarily to maintain schools' awareness that the workshops have value, rather than substantial fundraising.

To complement this, we hope to offer some Junior Peacemakers workshops at community venues, building on pilots that took place in 2019. These may allow children from different schools to mix, which was an important part of the Hub-based workshops. Stepping outside the school environment can help children and staff to look at issues differently, especially when are planning actions that they will take back to their schools.

Other partnership work

We will continue to build on our existing partnerships, including on refugees, economic inequality, the arms trade. A particular partnership focus is the climate emergency, which has engaged people from different backgrounds, and intersects with many of the other peace & social justice issues that we work on. An important lesson from partnership working has been the importance of making sure that the voices of marginalised people are heard. In 2022, we plan to reach out to marginalised communities who are organising for themselves, and those working with people in the Global South, to amplify their voices.

Support our Work

Our work relies on support from people like you, who are passionate about peace and justice. Please consider making a donation using the details below:

BACS transfer to Central England Quakers Peace Hub, CAF Bank,
Sort code 40-52-40, Account 00024686

Send a cheque made payable to "Central England Quakers Peace Hub"
to 41 Bull St, Birmingham, B4 6AF.

Donate securely online at peacehub.org.uk/donate