

## **Alison Perry: Championing your cause through social media**

### **About Alison**

*Alison Perry is an award-winning blogger, who by day works as a magazine editor and by night writes about being a working mum on top UK mummy blog, [Not Another Mummy Blog](#).*

As part of the Aviva Community Fund expert team, Alison is offering her top tips on how to make the most of social media to champion your cause and encourage people to vote for your charity or community project.

### **Using social media to campaign for votes**

Once you have submitted your entry, it's time to get campaigning! Drumming up votes for your entry, from when voting opens on 21 October until voting closes on 18 November, will not only raise the profile of your cause, but will also increase your chances of winning funding from the Aviva Community Fund. Social media is a great way of gaining community support.

However, it's very important to make sure you are using the right social media platforms for your campaign (by platforms I mean social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and choosing a social media username that is the same across all platforms to make it as easy as possible for people to find your charity or community group.

### **Getting started: setting up your social media platforms**

**Twitter:** Twitter is a great way of sharing URL links to the Aviva Community Fund voting page with both your existing and new supporters. If you don't already have an account, you will need to create one by clicking [here](#). After creating an account with a username that relates directly to your cause e.g. @healthyheartwalkers, you can post messages (tweets) of up to 140 characters.

When you set up a Twitter account for your charity or community organisation, be sure to add a profile image – this personalises your account and makes it more recognisable to people seeking to follow you and support your cause. Having your organisation's logo or photo as a profile image also makes the charity or community group look authentic.

**Facebook:** For more detail on Facebook, see the special Facebook Toolkit module.

**Instagram:** An Instagram account can be a brilliant way of reaching new people in an engaging way through pictures. Instagram is best described as 'photo blogging', you can take a snap on your smartphone, you can retouch it, add filters to the image to make it more interesting or impactful and upload it directly to your account. Again, it's as simple as registering an account at [here](#) with the same username as you are using Twitter and Facebook, and start snapping!

### **How to use your social media platforms to win votes**

Now that you have your platforms set up you can start getting your story out there, gather followers and win votes.

**Here are the ingredients to a successful social media campaign:**

**Tell the story of your organisation or charity** – use social media to post regular updates and photos of what you're doing to drum up support and keep your followers interested. Ask your followers questions to involve them in your Aviva Community Fund campaign so they are more likely to vote for your entry.

**Act professionally** - it's important that you promote a good image for your charity or community organisation across all of your social media accounts and act professionally as the organisation's representative at all times.

**Don't post too often** – there's a fine line between keeping people interested and intruding on their social media feeds. Too many posts from you might make people unfollow your charity or community organisation. It's good to try and post once or twice a day to keep your followers engaged with your cause, while not overloading them with information.

**Use hashtags and keep it short and sweet** – hashtags are used to search for and find content on social media. All you need to do is decide on a word that relates to your participation in the Aviva Community Fund, pop a hashtag in front of it and add it at the end of each tweet you post. This allows people to search for their interests and see your social posts. You may choose hashtags such as #charity #community #communityspirit for example, and you immediately increase the chance of new people finding your posts and voting for your Aviva Community Fund entry.

Because of the character limit, tweets need to be kept short and sweet with messages delivered in a clear, succinct way. This is the best way to communicate quick updates about your cause or charity that help to tell your story and encourage people to vote for you to win funding from the Aviva Community Fund.

You could tweet something like: *We've entered the Aviva Community Fund to win funds for first aid training. Vote for us at [www.aviva.co.uk/community-fund](http://www.aviva.co.uk/community-fund) #communityspirit #firstaid*

Or

*Today our volunteers helped 30 kids. Vote for us so we can make a difference [www.aviva.co.uk/community-fund](http://www.aviva.co.uk/community-fund) #communityspirit #kidscentre*

**Use photos** – take a picture of your community organisation or charity in action to accompany your tweets or Facebook posts. A smartphone snap works just as well as a professional photo, and images are a great tool for bringing your organisation to life, catching someone's eye and encouraging them to vote.

**Use video** – most smartphones can be used to film and edit video. Filming your community group or charity in action or recording a member explaining why the cause needs votes from supporters will take people straight to the heart of your story. Keep videos short and snappy and upload them with relevant captions that include the URL to the Aviva Community Fund campaign page to encourage new and existing supporters to click through and vote for your cause

**Use language carefully** – I would advise against asking your followers to vote for you ‘as a favour’ and don’t beg for votes. When you share the link to the Aviva Community Fund voting page on social media, use the accompanying post to suggest you are giving your followers the opportunity to help you make a difference to the community. It’s a much more positive way of asking for the same thing!

**Tell people how much of their time you’re asking for** – voting for your charity or community organisation on the Aviva Community Fund website will only take a few minutes out of a day, so tell your followers that. People like to know what’s being asked of them, and they will like the fact they can make a difference in such a short time.

**Follow influencers** – find local councillors and key members of the community, or celebrities or bloggers who have large followings and share interests with you. Follow them on different social media channels and interact with them. If you share their posts with your followers and they might reciprocate and encourage their supporters to vote for your cause.

**Interact with your followers as much as you can** – never ignore a tweet or comment and always say thank you when people say they have voted for you or shown support in some way, even it’s just them re-tweeting or sharing your message. People love to show they’re helping others, so if you tweet someone to say thank you, they may retweet that, which then shares your Aviva Community Fund campaign with more followers.

*“Social media was incredibly important for us as we really needed a big community to get behind us in order to make it a winning entry. The number of votes we received was far beyond our own personal network, so it’s key that entrants take advantage of the opportunity provided by social media.”*

**Rob Whitwood, Inspired Youth, 2015 Winner**

**If you get any press coverage for your charity or community organisation, make sure you get them to include your social media details** – your Twitter tag, your Facebook address – it will help people who read the article find you quickly online and show their support.

**Top 5 tips for using social media to encourage votes for your cause:**

1. **Be consistent** – use the same usernames and tone of voice on all social media platforms. If you can, see if one person can look after all accounts to keep the messages consistent
2. **Be professional** – unfriendly behaviour on social media can be more damaging than not being on social media at all
3. **Make your messages clear** – if you want people to vote for you, make it really clear and share the URL to the Aviva Community Fund voting page. If people are confused, they’ll ignore the post
4. **Use visuals like photos and video** – they’re proven to engage more people, and engaged followers are more likely to vote for you. For more details, see the special photography and video toolkit modules

5. **Don't overthink it** – social media is just an extension of the real world, so chat naturally and have genuine conversations with your followers, it will help them to understand your cause better and will encourage them to vote for your entry