

NATIONAL
LOTTERY FUNDEDBrighton & Hove
City Council

Planning and running a campaign

A guide for community groups on how to think through and run a good campaign

A campaign is simply an organised set of actions aiming to achieve a specific goal.

To run a good campaign, you will need to do some careful thinking and talking in your group. There are a lot of choices to make before you launch your campaign.

This information sheet covers:

- Deciding on your goal(s)
- Identifying the decision-makers
- Crafting your campaign story
- Choosing your actions
- Evaluating, adapting and staying positive

Deciding on your goal(s)

Think through the problem

There are many different types of problem that you might want to address through a campaign. Your group might be angry about a national policy, opposed to a new local development, or worried about an ongoing issue in your area. For any type of problem, your group should agree on something specific and tangible that you would like to change.

Identify possible solutions

Once you have clearly agreed on the problem, your group should discuss possible solutions. What changes would make the situation better? Do some research to find out if the same problem has been successfully addressed in other places.

If the problem can only be addressed through very big changes, try to identify smaller changes that would be moves in the right direction. Smaller goals might include securing the support of a local councillor or a specific number of local people. Make sure all your goals are tangible and achievable – campaigning for something vague or impossible is very disheartening!

Include the right people

Think through who it will be useful or important to include in discussions. For example, if you are addressing a local issue and claiming to represent people in the local community, you should involve those people in some way. You could conduct a survey to find out people's views, or organise a public meeting where the issue can be discussed.

Including a range of people to help decide the specific goals of your campaign can be valuable in a number of ways. It can make sure your campaign has a broad base of support, and may help to recruit new people to your group or the campaign who are willing to do some of the work. It can also allow you to come up with ideas and options that your group might not have thought of by yourselves.

For more about how to involve people, see our information sheets *Involving people in your group*, *Organising a public meeting*, and *Designing and using surveys*.

Identifying the decision-makers

Once you are clear in your group about the specific problem you want to address and the potential solutions you are proposing, you can identify who you are going to target with your campaign. Find out who has the power to make the changes that you would like. This might be an individual, an organisation, or a committee – and they might be local or national.

For example, if you are campaigning against a local housing development, find out who decides whether a development is approved or not. This may be a housing committee on your local council. Identify who is on the committee, and find out if the committee makes the final decision or just makes recommendations to a larger body. You may be able to identify a number of different individuals or groups who are part of decision-making, and who it would therefore be useful for you to target with your campaign.

Crafting your campaign story

Good campaigns have a strong and relatable story at their core – a story that makes people care about the problem and feel like your campaign matters. A strong story can persuade potential supporters, journalists, and decision-makers that the goals you are aiming for are important enough to take action about.

A campaign story outlines why a change needs to happen (i.e. what the problem is), and why the changes you are proposing are a good solution to the problem. It is really useful to have reliable facts to back up the claims you are making, so spend some time doing some research. See our information sheet *State your case: how to write a campaign briefing* for ideas of where to source useful data and how to conduct your own simple research. You will want to find evidence that the problem exists, as well as facts that support your idea for a solution. Check if similar changes have been made before locally or elsewhere, and what evidence there is that these changes helped solve the problem there.

Take the example of a local Residents' Association wanting to address the problem that every time there are heavy rains, houses, roads and gardens are getting flooded.

They have done their research and are confident that if the local drains were cleared twice a year, the flooding would stop happening. The story at the core of their campaign would not be about drain maintenance – which is difficult to get excited about – but about the consequences of the flooding. The focus could be on the people whose homes and possessions keep getting ruined, the children whose outside play space is water-logged, and the people who feel trapped in their houses every time the pavements and roads are submerged. Photos of flooded areas and damaged homes would help potential supporters and decision-makers to relate to the problem.

This evidence of the problem would then be backed up with facts supporting the proposed solution (i.e. regular drain maintenance). Facts that would be valuable might include: relevant policy requirements about drain clearing – especially if there is evidence that these requirements are not being adhered to; evidence that the flooding only starting happening once the drains stopped being regularly cleared; and figures showing how much it is costing the council to repair water damaged properties and infrastructure, compared with how much less it would cost for the drains to be cleared twice a year.

For more details and tips on how to craft a story that shows how important and interesting your campaign is, see our information sheet *Writing a news release*.

Choosing your actions

There are a lot of different actions your group could choose to take during your campaign. How effective and useful any particular action might be depends on your specific goals, and how far along you are in your campaign – some actions might be great to get the campaign kick-started, while others might be better once you have already gained a supporter base or had some small wins.

For each action, think through how it will help to influence the decision-makers you have identified and encourage them to make the changes that you are hoping to bring about. For every action you choose, thoughtful planning and good organisation are key to success.

It is always useful to think about the medium- or long-term. For example, you might decide to start with some small, local activities that lead into a bigger, more dramatic event at a key date. Or you might choose to start your campaign with something very dramatic to get a lot of attention and then follow it up with more work in your local community. An idea of what your next steps will be is always useful.

If your campaign has one big end goal, and a number of smaller goals that you are aiming for along the way, you might want to create a 'road map' that outlines the actions you are planning to use to achieve each goal.

The following table (pages 4-6) lists some common campaign actions, and some of the circumstances in which they might be useful.

Action	Useful for
Public meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including people and finding out what people think about problems and possible solutions • Galvanising support • Generating good ideas • Generating energy and activity around your campaign and “getting the word out there” locally • Hooking in new activists/ people who are willing to do some work • See our information sheet <i>Organising a public meeting</i> for practical tips
Petitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you want to show that a lot of people support your campaign goal • Putting pressure on decision-makers • As a ‘hook’ for publicity • When your goal is national – or it would be relevant to have national (or international) support for your campaign • See our information sheet <i>Organising a petition</i> for practical tips and for details of how to petition Brighton and Hove City Council or the UK Government
Street stalls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking to people about their own experiences of the issue; finding out what people think about problems and possible solutions • Spreading your campaign message • Galvanising support • Making your campaign approachable • Collecting signatures on a petition
Door-to-door leafleting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When your campaign issue affects everyone in a local area • Raising awareness of your campaign and goals • Galvanising local support • Inviting people to join in with actions e.g. public demonstrations, signing petitions
Letter writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you want to show that people care really strongly about your campaign • When your campaign issue is very local, or affects a small number of people, and it might be possible to get almost all of them to write to the decision-makers • When your campaign is part of a formal consultation organised by an institution like local government

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing to prominent individuals or organisations asking them to support other campaign actions • See our information sheet <i>Organising a letter-writing campaign</i>
Face to face meetings with decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you have a specific proposal to discuss • Persuading decision-makers that your campaign goals are important enough for them to take some action around; to make your campaign relatable and real for decision-makers • There is a danger that you may be persuaded to dilute your demands in a face to face situation. Your group needs to prepare for this, and make sure you are all clear how much authority your representatives have to negotiate or change demands in the meeting, and what the representatives would need to come back to the whole group to discuss further.
Raising an issue at a Council meeting (asking a question or making a deputation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you have a specific proposal you want the Council to consider • Putting pressure on decision-makers and holding them publically accountable • Making your campaign relatable and real for decision-makers • When you want to ensure a formal and recorded response from local officials about your campaign issue • Attracting local media attention • Guidelines for how to give a deputation (speech) or ask a question at Brighton & Hove City Council meetings can be found on their website¹.
Public demonstrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-energising a campaign and having fun! • Reaching different people and gaining new supporters • Getting the attention of journalists and decision-makers
Non-violent direct action / civil disobedience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you want to show how strongly people feel about your campaign • To directly affect the decision-makers you are targeting e.g. shutting down a power station • Getting the attention of journalists, decision-makers, and the public • Needs to be used carefully

¹ <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/council-and-democracy/councillors-and-committees/going-a-full-council-or-committee-meeting>

Media stunts e.g. banner drops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating striking images to be used in social media and press releases • Generating energy and awareness around your campaign - something interesting and different that people will talk about
Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading your campaign message • Organising actions • Encouraging supporters to join in with actions e.g. online petitions • Sharing campaign updates and successes • See our information sheets <i>Facebook for community groups</i> and <i>Video-making tips</i>
Campaign website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having your own website means you can get your message out and have full control over how it is presented • Raising awareness of your campaign and goals • Highlighting the personal stories that help people relate to your campaign and want to support it • Sharing campaign updates and successes
Stickers and posters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising public awareness about your campaign • Reaching a local audience • Posters in people's windows are effective if you have enough people willing to display them. Flyposting/stickering in the streets is not legal, so needs to be thought through and used with caution!
Press releases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of your campaign and goals • Putting pressure on decision-makers to be publically accountable • See our information sheets <i>Writing a news release</i> and <i>State your case: how to write a campaign briefing</i>
TV and radio interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of your campaign and goals • Highlighting the personal stories that help people relate to your campaign and want to support it • Putting pressure on decision-makers in a public arena • See our information sheet <i>A community group's guide to TV and radio interviews</i>

Evaluating, adapting and staying positive

Making change happen isn't easy. Campaigns tend to be unpredictable and full of ups and downs, and it can be easy to feel disheartened during the downs. But if one action doesn't happen like you thought it would, or another action doesn't have the outcome you were hoping for, it doesn't mean your campaign is failing. As long as your group makes time to evaluate each action after you have done it, you can always learn from what has happened and use it to strengthen your campaign.

After each action, discuss as a group whether it achieved what you wanted it to, how you could have made it more effective, and where it leaves your campaign. Unexpected events or outcomes can often open up new opportunities, and you can adapt your campaign 'road map' or the specifics of your next action to use these opportunities to your advantage. Try to accept the things that are out of your control, and stay focused on taking the actions that you can take. With patience, perseverance and good planning, campaigning can – and does – bring about significant change.

Keep your supporters updated with what you have been doing, what has happened, and what you are planning to do next. Don't be afraid to tell them honestly about the challenges and frustrations of your campaign, as well as the good things you are achieving.

Finally, remember that a whole variety of positive changes can come out of campaigning in addition to achieving your main campaign goals. These include: bringing people in a community together and creating new social networks; building practical skills, self-esteem and confidence; and giving people a sense of belonging and purpose. Campaign activities can help to build strong communities and help the people who live in those communities to be happier and healthier.