

How to... Start a Campaign

Why get involved in a campaign?

- To improve your local environment or make your community a safer place, such as reducing speed limits on local roads
- To make local services more responsive or save a valuable local service, such as local schools, bus services or care support
- To influence or change local or national policy, such as better equality and human rights e.g. equal pay, civil partnerships, tuition fees

Making a case for change

In order to persuade people to make the change you want, you need to gather as much evidence as possible to support your cause.

You can do your research through:

- Libraries, national and local surveys, newspapers, the internet and, most of all, people affected by the issue you are campaigning on can be useful.
- Contact other groups that may be campaigning on similar issues to share experience of *what works*.
- Local councils hold a lot of information, much of which is freely available. You might need to use the Freedom of Information Act (see *How to... Use the Freedom of Information Act* guide)

Do you feel strongly about an issue affecting your local area?
Do you find that others share your thoughts?
Would you like to see the situation change?
Then campaign about it!



Preparing a campaign

Five key questions to consider when thinking about starting a campaign:

1. **What is it that you want to campaign about?** Be clear about the issues involved and what you want your campaign to achieve.
2. **Do others want the same as you?** It would be very hard to make a successful campaign about an issue that only affects you, e.g. a campaign to stop litter being dropped in your garden is unlikely to get many other people on-board compared to a campaign to stop litter in your whole street or neighbourhood.
3. **Do you really know your issue?** Read up on the background, key players, relevant legislation and council or government policy. Showing those you are trying to influence that you are well informed will mean that they are more likely to listen and respond to you.
4. **Are you committed to it?** Running a successful campaign will take up your time, test your perseverance and mean that you have to deal with people who disagree with you.
5. **Are you realistic about what you want to achieve?** It is often better to start small. For example, campaigning for a small amount of money to redecorate your local community centre has more chance of being considered than asking for a large sum of money to knock it down and build a new one.

Be careful when publishing material to avoid the risk of being sued for libel or defamation.

Setting up a campaign

It is important to get a core group of committed people together to help you organise the campaign. This way you will have lots of resources and skills to draw upon, and support when needed. You also need to decide on the best way to communicate your campaign to those you want to influence.

Organise a petition

This is one of the most simple and effective ways to demonstrate the level of support for your campaign. With the permission of local shops and businesses, you can have copies for people to sign in your local area. You can create a free online petition at www.ipetitions.com.

Hold an Event

Events are a good way to inform people about your campaign and to encourage supporters to get to know each other. You could even invite representatives from the organisation your campaign is targeting. This will give them the opportunity to hear your supporters' views and have a public debate.

Hold a demonstration

A successful public demonstration, whether it is a march, a media stunt, or a picket line, can provide a fantastic visual image of your campaign.



Evaluating your campaign

Throughout your campaign assess *what works*:

- Where have your successes come from?
- Who still needs to be convinced?
- Has your promotional work been successful?
- What tactics are not working?
- What still needs to be done?

Build on your successes and rewrite your action plan.

Gathering support

The more people you have on board the more your campaign will have to be taken seriously. You could gain supporters by:

Knocking on people's doors: This is an easy way to get a local campaign known in your area. Make sure you are clear about who you are, what the campaign is about and what you want it to achieve.

Producing leaflets and posters: Giving a leaflet to people you talk to will help keep the issue in their minds and remind them of what they can do to support the campaign. You can put leaflets through people's doors and ask shops and businesses to display leaflets and posters for you.

Working with other organizations: If you feel passionate about something, there will probably be other groups in your area or across the UK who share similar concerns. Publicising your campaign through their networks will significantly increase your support base. Get in touch with residents' groups, tenants' associations, community centres and national organisations, and make sure your local councillors and MP know what you are up to. You could also write letters to individuals and organisations asking for funding support. Their replies will identify those people or organisations who support you, and those who don't.

Using the media: If you can get the local or national media to run a story on your campaign, you will reach thousands of people (see *How to... Be in the news*). Also use the letters page in the media to get your message across.

Further information: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/goodpracticecampaigning