

# How to run a successful campaign

Tips and advice for people who want to bring change

The best campaigns excite, inspire, and empower people. They aim to challenge what’s currently happening and bring about change.

There are many types of campaigns and all sorts of actions that you can take, but it can be difficult to know where to start.

This is a guide to organising your own campaign so that you can achieve your goals – whatever your experience, skills or interests.



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# 1. Planning your campaign



If you are planning a campaign here are some useful questions to think about:

## What is the problem?

- Identify what you want to change, and be as specific as possible.
- Be clear about how achievable this may be.
- You might have a big issue that you want to address, but it would be impossible for one person to tackle on their own. So consider breaking your issue down into smaller steps.

For example, if you wanted to make cinema screenings more accessible you would be better starting off with your own local cinema, rather than trying to take on every cinema in England.

## What are the steps you need to take?

- Think about the goal of your campaign and the steps you need to take to get there.
- You could give yourself monthly tasks and goals to help you achieve your overall aim.

## Who do you want to influence – and who can help you with this?

It is important to identify the individuals or organisations that you want to target and influence – those who will be in a position to make the changes you ask for. In order to do this it is also important to identify any individuals or groups who can help you to reach and influence the person you are targeting.

For example, you may want to persuade the Director of Social Services for your local

authority to make a social care service more accessible. To move this forward you could meet with your local councillor and ask them to take up your concern with the Director of Social Services. Councillors can change the authorities' policies, decide how the council's budget is spent and put pressure on to change things.

You can find out how local governments are structured, how decisions are made, and how to make complaints on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

**Other examples:**

- You could contact the manager of a local business or service to ask them to adapt their service so that it is more flexible. If they are happy to do this, you could ask them to suggest these changes to the management team or board of directors of the national company.
- If you approach your local Member of Parliament (MP) they could raise your concerns in parliament, write to a relevant minister, influence local issues, and much more. You can find out more about [MPs](#) and [how parliament works](#) at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk). Also check out the '[Parliament Explained](#)' podcast.

To find out who represents you, more about them, and how to contact them, you can use the '[write to them](#)' website.

**Who will join you on your campaign?**

Successful campaigning is never a one person show. The most effective campaigns are ones that are led and voiced by people directly affected by a particular issue.

- Social media and local press can be a useful way to inform and engage more people and build up support.
- Local or national organisations (like Sense) may already be working on larger campaigns related to yours. It may be effective to link up with their work or ask for support.
- Getting the support of individuals or groups that have access to, and influence with, the people you are targeting can be very helpful. For example, local councillors, MPs, opinion formers, journalists or other public figures.

**What will be the most effective campaign method?**

The approach you use should be tailored to who you want to target and what you are campaigning about. For example:

- If you want to gather support and evidence that your issue is important to people then an online petition will be a useful tool.
- When contacting an MP it is best to use email. MPs receive many letters and an email can be re-sent when you call to follow up.
- Effective campaigns will usually use a number of approaches together – so think about the order that actions should take place in and how they can be coordinated to create a bigger impact.

## 2. Gathering evidence and knowing your rights

A campaign needs to provide evidence that a problem exists – which shows how it affects people, how widespread it is, and what the solutions might be.



### Personal stories

Personal stories are a powerful and emotive way to get your story across. It is vital that your campaign is based on the direct experiences of the people affected. You can do this in a number of ways.

#### Setting up an online survey:

- Is quick and easy for people to respond to and easy to share.
- Can help show how widespread a problem is.

#### Interviewing people

(over the telephone or face-to-face):

- Can be an effective way to build in-depth understanding of an issue.
- Provides stories that can be featured as case studies throughout the campaign.

#### Hosting a focus group:

- can be a useful way to capture conversations between people with shared experiences.

#### Remember!

- Always make sure you have consent from everyone involved.
- Contributors should remain anonymous unless they have agreed otherwise.
- Review any information with people before sharing it.
- Make it easy for people to be involved but be respectful of their time and effort.
- Be considerate with sensitive topics. It's not easy for people to relive their worries and bad experiences.
- Make sure you can effectively signpost people to places where they can get support if they need it.
- Always present people and their stories in the way that they themselves want. Don't exploit personal stories for your own ends.

Sometimes people might share information with you that needs to be passed on to other people for safety reasons. To protect others and yourself from any harm, make sure that you are aware of safeguarding issues and what the appropriate safeguarding measures should be. Visit <https://www.sense.org.uk/get-support/information-and-advice/safeguarding-and-keeping-safe/> for more information.

## Your rights



Knowing your rights will make your campaign stronger and have more impact. The [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#) is a key source of information about this, including these pieces of legislation:

- The [Equality Act 2010](#) is the main discrimination law in Britain.
- The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) sets out what human rights mean in the context of disability on an international scale.
- The [Care Act 2014](#) provides the legal framework for adult social care in England. For Wales see the [Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014](#)
- The [Children and Families Act 2014](#) outlines how support should be offered to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Implementation of the [Accessible Information Standard](#) means that people have rights to accessible information and communication support when using health and social care services.



Staff and volunteers from Sense's shops encouraged customers to sign a petition in support of our When I'm Gone campaign. Over 35,000 people signed the petition which was handed in to 10 Downing Street.

## 3. Campaign tools

There are number of campaign tools and activities you could use:

### Campaign letters or emails



Contacting people in writing is a good place to start, and generally it's helpful to record correspondence in writing. Here are some tips on putting together an effective letter:

#### Structure and format

- Make sure the purpose of the letter is clear.
- Include the recipient's name, your name, contact details, and the date.

#### Top tips

- Make your letter short and to the point (less than one page).
- Spell-check your letter.
- Request a reply and allow a reasonable period of time for a reply. If the person fails to respond then follow up with them.
- Keep it simple.

#### Accessibility

- If you need a reply in a different format, such as large print, braille or tape, make sure you ask for this in your letter.

### Meetings

Meetings are often useful for influencing people. Remember to:

#### Prepare beforehand

- Make sure you know who you are meeting and why.
- Be clear what you want to achieve in the meeting, and how you will do this.
- Think about the questions they might ask you.
- Make sure any communication support or accessibility has been confirmed beforehand.
- Plan how you will travel there and leave plenty of time.

#### Participate

- Speak confidently but also listen.
- Respect what others say.

#### Follow-up

- Ask to be kept informed of progress.
- Write to them to thank them and summarise action points.

## Petitions



Petitions are a formal written request, signed by many people, addressed to representatives or authorities in support of a particular cause. Online petitions tend to get more people signing up and there are a number of independent organisations that can make it much easier for people to start one – such as [Change.org](https://www.change.org/) or [38 degrees](https://www.38degrees.org/). The [government](https://www.gov.uk/government/petitions) also host petitions on their website. If these are not accessible contact the organisations concerned.

You can collect signatures independently and send your petition to the people you want to influence. If you do this, always make sure you keep a copy of your petition.

## E-actions

E-actions are coordinated actions which take place online. For example, you might ask supporters to write to an MP or councillor about a specific issue. Remember – if you are asking lots of people to write to an individual or organisation make it easy for them: provide them with template letters, let them know how they can contact the relevant person and provide guidance on what they can do with responses.

## Publicity



The aim of publicity is to catch people's attention and communicate your key messages to a wider audience. There are various ways you might do this:

- Write and produce your own publicity materials – posters, leaflets, blogs, social media platforms (like Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram).
- Write letters to newspaper editors.
- Send a press release to local or national newspapers, radio or television. Say that you, or someone with experience of the issue you are campaigning about, are available for interview.
- Contact relevant campaign organisations (like Sense) who may be able to support you and provide additional coverage.

If you would like support or advice from the Sense media team, or would just like to get in touch, do contact us:

**email:** [mediaenquiries@sense.org.uk](mailto:mediaenquiries@sense.org.uk)

**telephone:** 0207 014 9384

## Produce resources to support the campaign

When you are campaigning about problems that people face, it can be useful to have prepared some resources that can help others to get the message across. For example, if you are campaigning for more respite care in your local area, you might have gathered lots of facts and figures about this issue. These could be put into a factsheet that can be used by others supporting the campaign.

## To get involved with Sense campaigns:

**Email:** [campaigns@sense.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@sense.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 0300 330 9258

**Textphone:** 02075202600

**Write to us:** Public Policy Team, Sense,  
101 Pentonville Road, London N1 9LG

