

Campaigning, advocacy and systems change

How can peers work together to campaign and advocate for change?

Disclaimer

This briefing is a summary of various resources. You should not take the information provided here as a given: the concepts and theories we found useful may or may not apply to your network. We also acknowledge that similar theories and concepts appear in systems change, community organising and social change literature.

If you find yourself disagreeing with or questioning some of the points in this briefing, please make a note of it, as there will be an opportunity to discuss during our online session.

How to use this resource

Reading this document front-to-back may be a bit of an information overload. It might be easier to dip in and out of it according to your interests and current network issues. If you would rather read the whole thing one go - that's also great!

This resource aims to:

- Provide background for the next session on 8th November
- Support you in learning about campaigning

Below is a table of contents that will help you navigate this briefing. Each section gives an overview of the topic and then poses some questions that you may want to think about in relation to your own network.

We hope you find this useful, happy reading!

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1 What is campaigning, advocacy and systems change?

You might call it influencing, voice, advocacy or campaigning, but all these activities are about creating change through disrupting the status quo, usually with other people, organisations and resources.

Whatever you call it – and whether you are trying to save a local community centre from closing, bringing the local council on board, or lobbying government – underneath the process, is a careful realignment of power.

1.1 Definitions

Advocacy is the effort to support, enable and empower voices to be heard on matters that are important to the individual. It can often mean that you are speaking on behalf of others.

Voice is the term used for enabling and supporting people to develop their own style of communicating their story.

“We should be working towards being facilitators of the voices of affected people”

Member of Bond Southern Advocacy Quality Group

A **movement** seeks to create sweeping change. It contains campaigning and advocacy within it, alongside networks, service delivery and much more. Typically it will work with collaborators, advocates, and stakeholders to get ‘the message’ out and enable change across networked communities to create a mindset shift.

Campaigning is organised actions around a specific issue seeking to bring about changes in the policy and behaviours of institutions and/or specific public groups - it often involves mobilising of forces to influence others in order to effect an identified and desired social [behavioural], economic, environmental or political change.

Systems change is about addressing the root causes of social problems, which are often intractable and embedded in networks of cause and effect. It is an intentional process designed to fundamentally alter the components and structures that cause the system to behave in a certain way.

Q1: How do you think advocacy, voice, campaigning and/or systems change is relevant to your network?

1.2 Why campaign?¹

Campaigning can be the best and most effective way of achieving your goals. There are many reasons why voluntary and community organisations campaign as a way of achieving their mission:

- Campaigning can address the root causes of social problems and not just their effects. Some organisations may take a two-pronged approach - they might provide services to support people

¹ Taken from Nonprofitknowhow.org

experiencing a particular problem, while also campaigning to tackle the root cause of the problem. An example might be a government policy or decision.

- Campaigning can shine a spotlight on emerging issues that have not yet been picked up by policy makers. Because voluntary and community organisations are often very close to their service users and beneficiaries, organisations can use evidence from their experience to highlight these issues.
- Campaigning can help give a voice to those without one, or bring together disparate voices to create a collective roar.
- Campaigning can lead to social change and the provision by the state of resources, services and entitlements that are many times greater than the resources that were used to run the campaign.
- Campaigning is sometimes the only action possible, especially when the scale of the problem is large or cannot be dealt with without state intervention.

Q2: Will you be running a campaign to benefit your stakeholders OR enabling your network members to run their own campaign OR both?

1.3 How to know when to use which approach?

It can be really hard to know when to gear up your organisation, network and assets - and to know that the right type of action is needed to create change. Often when you are encountering an obstacle using something like a power analysis will help you think through what is needed to happen.

A power analysis²

‘As community organisations we work with our beneficiaries power to make the changes we want to see. We not only build power through relationships, but also understand that power is exercised in relation to its context and other power players. In order to run effective campaigns and organisations we must be always aware of our relationship to power and how it is operating’.

Our assumptions include:

- 1) Power relationships are unequal right now and this is key to why we have the problem / issue that we are working on.
- 2) Power is being exercised and there is an agenda at work.
- 3) A more systematic way of understanding POWER and how it is exercised is necessary to making long term social change.

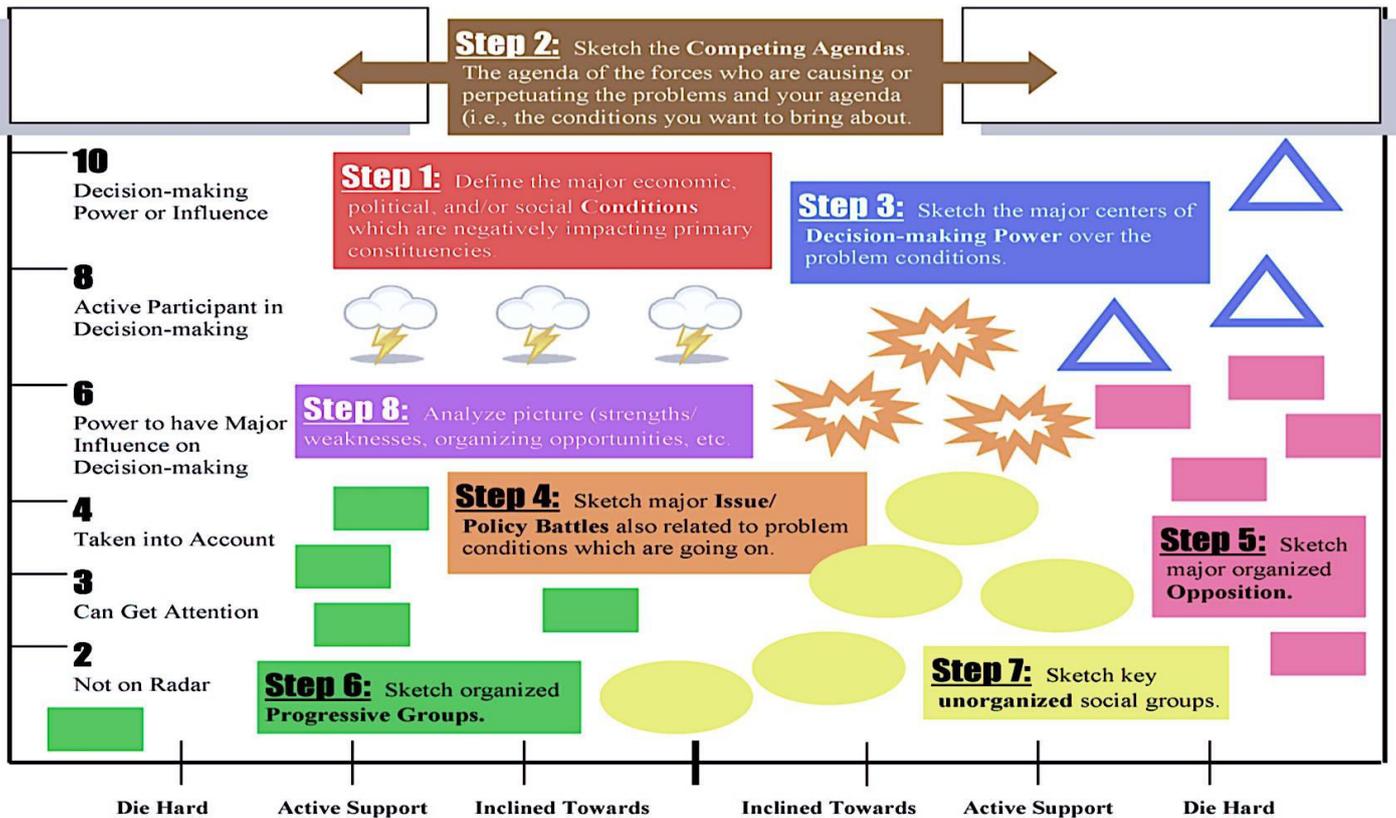
We use this tool to map out current power relationships and to then think through:

- How to shift those relationships to increase our power
- How to move groups with power to our agenda

² Adapted by SCA from People’s Action, 2015.

Ultimately, we think through how we will need to shift the power relationships to pressure decision-makers to give us what we want.

STEPS TO DEVELOP A STRATEGIC POLITICAL LANDSCAPE POWER ANALYSIS



Q3: How might a power analysis be relevant to your network?

Case study: Business in the Community (BITC)

BITC have over a decade of on-the-ground experience delivering programmes which have supported over 3,000 people affected by homelessness or other challenging circumstances to build successful working lives. They do this through campaigning, influencing through policy development and changing practice.

Campaigning for businesses and government to take action

Through their policy, research and campaigning work, they inform, engage and challenge business and Government on the cultural and structural barriers that prevent people from disadvantaged groups from gaining and sustaining employment.

They target business leaders as the decision makers and people with the power to make or influence change. Their campaign activity focuses on three specific issue groups, aiming to create the best

environment for individuals from these groups to build successful working lives.

- Business Action on Homelessness (BAOH) – established in 1998 by a core group of business leaders, their BAOH campaign has conducted research, made recommendations to Government and developed tools to help support people who have experienced homelessness or are at risk of homelessness into employment.
- Reducing Re-offending through Employment – through campaigns such as Ban the Box, they provide support and knowledge to both employers and ex-offenders to support the positive disclosure of criminal convictions and to break down the barriers preventing ex-offenders from entering employment and building successful working lives.
- Care Leavers – they raise awareness of the challenges facing young people in the transition from care to independent living. Through Seeing is Believing visits they've brought this issue to the forefront for a group of business leaders.

Through all their campaigns, their aim is to ensure:

- that the benefits and welfare to work **systems help rather than hinder** people on their journey to employment,
- that **employers are supported and informed** to break down barriers to work,
- that **companies and Government provide the support needed** to help people sustain work, once they are in employment.

Once you have done your power analysis, and worked through what the change is you are looking to do - the next step could be look at what type of campaigning you are looking to undertake.

Harie Han, in 'How Organisations Develop Activists', (2014 Oxford University Press), researched several community organisations and networks in order to examine contemporary models for engaging activists, alongside the ability of organisations to help achieve change through and with people.

She writes that organisations that combined an ability to develop leadership in their supporter base (organising) alongside campaigning with their supporters (transactional mobilising), had more success. She defined mobilising as focusing on maximising the number of people involved without developing their capacity for civic action. Whereas organising entailed developing the capacities of people to engage in activism and become leaders.

Case study: Grapevine

Grapevine are a charity based in Coventry who help people experiencing isolation, poverty and disadvantage to build better lives. They provide practical tools and training to help people build their collective power and tackle the problems they're facing, helping them to spark and sustain

movements for change.

Investing in people as leaders for change

[Walk and Talks](#) are organised as part of Grapevine's #covmindthegap initiative which brings together people who want to make changes in their lives and communities. They're held monthly with a different theme for each walk and the opportunity to pause and listen to a speaker along the route. Grapevine supports people who are doing things in their community to take on the leadership role of being a speaker on these walks and inspire others.

Ideas Factories and Innovations Factories are part of the way Grapevine build the capacity of system 'leaders' from all sectors and communities across Coventry.

The [ideas factories](#) bring people together informally (often in a pub opposite the council offices) to create solutions to shared problems. The factory sessions follow a structure which gives people a platform to tell a story of a problem they want to tackle and then the attendees, made up of those who can affect change and those who will be affected by changes, brainstorm and work together to come up with a workable solution. There's a strong call to action about what everyone can do next to take it forward at the end.

Innovation factories are run to provide a more formal training for people with ideas to develop their leadership skills. They follow a two-part structure as training workshops in which participants are introduced to the use of storytelling in developing their own social movements and campaigns.

By bringing people together to tell stories, create solutions to shared problems and to socialise as well as by building their leadership skills, Grapevine are creating a network of social movements which collectively change the way that the systems affecting these people work.

[Read more...](#)

(it's interesting but quite a long read so don't feel you need to, we'll also be covering this in the online workshop as Mel from Grapevine is joining us to explore a bit further)...

Q4: What do your networks do to build people's capacity for leadership?

Q5: What do your networks do to mobilise and organise people to campaign?

To help you think through whether an organising or mobilising approach can help - have a look at the table on the page below.

	Lone Wolves	Mobilisers (supporter base)	Organizers (Investing into leadership and networks,alliances)
Strategy for building power	Build power through information	Build power by building membership; take people where they are	Build power building leadership; transform motivations and capacities of members to take on more leadership
Strategy for building membership	n/a	Chose advocacy strategies that require quick engagement by lots of people (ie petitions) focus on reacting to timely events that engage people.	Build membership by developing leaders who can engage others; constantly develop leadership among new prospect.
Implications for advocacy	Choose advocacy strategies that can be done without many people	Choose advocacy strategies that require quick engagements by lots of people, focus on reacting to timely events that engage people.	Choose advocacy strategies that build people’s engagement over time;focus on campaigns that sequence actions that people can take.
Implications for structure	Centralised responsibility in the hands of staff or a few key volunteers	Centralised responsibility in the hands of staff or a few key volunteers	Distributed responsibility out to a large network of volunteers
Implications for types of asks for volunteers	n/a	Focus on discrete requests that often allow people to act quickly and alone	Focus on independent asks that are often time-intensive, force people to work with other and give them strategic autonomy
Implications for comms with volunteers	Provide information and updates to interested people	Focus on reaching out to as many people as possible by developing attractive ‘pitches’	Focus on reaching out to people by building relationships and community with them
Implications for support	Minimal resources needed for training and reflection	Minimal resources needed for training and reflection	Need extensive resources for training, coaching and reflection

2. The campaign cycle³

This section is to help you understand how to run a successful campaign within your network. Once you have decided what you are campaigning on - the next step is to think about what kind of campaign you will run.

It is helpful to think of campaigning as a cycle from beginning through to completion of the campaign.

The campaigns cycle is a campaigning tool that helps simplify what happens through the course of a campaign. It is a useful overview that should be used to keep you on track, and a tried and tested way of thinking through the stages of a typical campaign.

It can help people to see that during campaigning we make choices that we think will achieve maximum impact. The campaigns cycle is not intended as a literal representation to follow whatever circumstances you find yourself in, but a tool to help you and your network campaign better.



2.1 Analysing the issue

- Explore the issue and develop a compelling evidence base or case for your campaign.
- Turn evidence into a solution for change.
- Re-analyse the context – both external and internal to your campaign – to ensure you select the most suitable issue to campaign on.

2.2 Developing a strategy for change

- Develop a clearly defined campaign aim, clearly setting out the change you want to see and the impact you want to make.
- Develop a theory or picture of how you think change will happen. Build in ways to keep on track and remain focused on your ultimate aim.
- Create a plan of action.
- Develop KPI's around success.
- Run the campaign and monitor progress along the way.
- Evaluate your campaign – understand the impact you are making and learn from your experiences, building on success and managing failures.

2.3 Creating a plan of action

Start finding the routes to influence power. Who are your targets? & what power do you have?

“Campaigning is an active and dynamic discipline. As a result many campaigners like to follow

³ Sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4 taken from nonprofitknowhow.org

their gut instinct, seize opportunities as they arise and adapt tactics as they go. They believe that campaigners should act fast and furiously..... [yet] many of the of the most unsuccessful campaigns are based on a so-called intuitive approach”

From Tess Kingham & Jim Coe, *The Good Campaign Guide, Campaigning for Impact*, 2005.

The key to a good campaign is planning, planning, planning! Choosing the right solution is vital because it influences the whole direction of your campaign. If your solution is unsuitable or unachievable, you run the risk of wasting resources, alienating your supporters and network and gain a reputation for being disingenuous.

So what makes a campaign winnable?

There is no set formula to follow but a combination of the following does tend to help...

- The ability to assign responsibility for the current situation to a clear target.
- Obvious influencing opportunities
- The ability to tap into a sense of deeply and/or widely felt public outrage
- An issue that grabs the attention
- A sense of urgency and importance
- A short and clear story/case study
- A group of potential beneficiaries who have particular electoral influence.

It also helps if you are prepared to be pragmatic about what campaign victory might look like by;

- Offering solutions or remedies that are politically attractive to decision makers
- Being willing to negotiate an outcome

Tess Kingham and Jim Coe, *The Good Campaign Guide, Campaigning for Impact*, 2005 p. 37

Understand how your local targets work:

- How your local council works <http://m.cravenc.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=1478&p=0>
- Guide to working with your MP:
http://breastcancernow.org/sites/default/files/public/guide_to_working_with_your_mp.pdf

Setting the campaign aim

Once you have decided what you want to achieve, the type of campaigning your organisation is going to do, and you have done your power analysis on the problem - it helps to set a clear SINGLE campaign aim. This should cover the purpose of the campaign. It should be communicated easily and succinctly to anyone who wants to know about it.

Do not confuse your campaign *aim* and your *objectives* - these are the stepping stones that are needed to win the overall aim.

2.4 Delivering your campaign

Understand your target audiences, develop a good communications strategy and pitch the messages in the right way. Develop tailored campaign actions.

Communicate with target audiences using ways that will best reach them.

Ongoing monitoring to check you are on track.

2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring: *The regular, ongoing tracking and assessment that goes on during the lifetime of the campaign*

Evaluation: *Set-piece, retrospective assessments.*

What is monitoring and evaluation? M&E is a key part of any campaign strategy and should be considered at the heart of your strategy. You need to evaluate because if you don't measure and track where you are going you can end up off course and/or wasting resources. Monitoring and evaluation sits alongside your campaigning work as laid out below.

Starting Point ..	Shown through...
Know what you are trying to achieve	Your vision and aim
Have a plausible sense of how you are going to achieve it	Your objectives and theory of change
Be clear about whether you are on the right course	Your approach to monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation research is typically conducted by focus groups, surveys, interviews, polls and quantitative analysis.

If you can't afford the cost of doing big research then things you can do for free include:

- Listen to what your opponents/targets are saying - what are their messages, what are they saying about your messages? how is this changing?
- Talk to your supporters, do short surveys if there are things you need to find out
- Track media and social media coverage
- Check your/your members' twitter accounts to see how your messages are spreading

When doing monitoring and evaluation remember!

- Don't just look at the end result, look at the interim outcomes, the pathway to change
- Track your progress and outcomes: What are people doing/thinking differently?
- Think about how effectively you are delivering the campaign: *How effectively you are communicating your messages? Are your tactics working?*

Q6: How might you use this campaign cycle as a tool to support the development and delivery of campaigns in your network?

3 Tactics

The trick to a successful campaign is a clever use of campaign tactics. There are countless ways to reach to get people's voices in front of those in power, but the question is what makes the most sense for *your* campaign and your network?

Here are some of the traditional and not-so-traditional ways of mobilising your campaigners/members to create change:

Mobilising your members/campaigners to.....

- Communicate with others to bring them on board with the campaign
- Hold or join demonstrations - a good way of demonstrating public support for your causes.
- Attend or run a public meeting to bring people together to discuss the issue - it is also a good way of identifying activists in the community, alongside bringing your target out in a public space.
- Letter writing from members to your target, or those around the target, or to the press.
- Start, do and share, e-actions from sites such as Advocacy on line, or change.org to your target, press etc. This is also a good way of recruiting new supporters
- Run street stalls and petitions which are a good old fashioned way of being out in the community and connecting with new people around the cause.
- Inform the campaign through Freedom of Information Requests- see case study below

Case study: 38 degrees

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) both came about as the result of many years of campaigning by individual citizens and voluntary and community organisations.

Freedom of Information can be used as a powerful and versatile campaigning tool at a local or national level, whether to develop the content of a campaign or to gain crucial information on how decisions are made. It shows how campaigners are at the forefront of developing our 'right to know', making government more transparent and exploring key challenges.

38 degrees are the UK's largest campaigning body. This year, they launched a people-powered investigation by sending Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to councils about what they were doing with their parks (reviewing management, cutting budgets etc) and then all the responses were collated so 38 degrees could build a picture of what was happening to parks across the country. This will inform the campaign strategy and delivery.

[Read more...](#)

4 Final note

Community businesses in the social sector are frequently involved in seeking to change practice, policy or whole systems that they're operating in, to create better outcomes for their users. Networks can be an effective vehicle for collective action to make change happen. Building leadership and voice amongst network members is needed for delivery of effective collective action to create change and is therefore an integral part of managing peer networks. This briefing presents some of the tools to support you in building the capacity of your network members to develop and run campaigns autonomously.

Q7: What is the role of the network coordinator in building capacity of members to campaign for change?

5 Further resources

- Jim Coe and Rhonda Schlangen, [*Advocacy Evaluation: Looking through the right end of the telescope*](#) (2011)
- Ian Chandler, [*Advocacy and Campaigning, a How To guide*](#) (2013)
- Tim Gee and Ruth Mayne, [*Beneficiary Voice in Campaigning*](#), (2011)
- [*NCVO's Good Guide to Campaigning and Influencing*](#)
- NPC's [*Systems Change: A guide to what it is and how to do it*](#)
- Harie Han, [*How Organisations Develop Activists*](#), 2016
- Richard Thaylor and Cass Sustein, [*Nudge*](#), 2008
- [*Online campaigning tools and training*](#) .350.org

