



# tips on good practice in campaigning



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# Introduction

There is no doubt that, over the years, significant and extraordinary achievements have been secured through the efforts and dedication of campaigners, in this country and across the world. Against the odds, unimaginable advances have been made. Clearly, there is much to learn from others' experiences. But for all kinds of reasons, analysing the elements that combine to create successful campaigns is not a straightforward undertaking.

For a start, there are a number of questions about what constitutes success in campaigning terms. This isn't the place to address them, but they include how you assess success (one person's principled compromise is another's feeble sell-out), how you measure it (is securing policy change a success, or can you only claim success if you change people's lives positively, without negative spin-offs) and how you judge the roles of the players involved (given the complex nature of change, effects are invariably difficult to attribute).

Nor is there much publicly available that says x campaign was successful for y reasons, although there is some. We have looked for this and drawn on it where we found it. We have also based our suggestions on our own experiences of evaluating campaigns – ranging from brilliant to terrible – over the past six years, and we have kindly been given permission to quote from three of these evaluations by Shelter, Which? and Amnesty International UK. In pulling together some thoughts for this report, we have also spoken to a small number of expert commentators who have been able to offer a range of perspectives on what makes campaigning effective.

Across all these sources, there is a surprising degree of consistency in the analysis of what makes campaigning more likely to be effective and we have summarised this in what follows.

Because all organisations are different and all issues unique, it doesn't make sense to claim that, if you only do certain things, your campaign will succeed. That's not how it works. But there are common themes, things to think about, whatever your campaign. And we have tried to identify and highlight these common themes drawing on a wide range of examples to do so: from international to local; from campaigns promoting highly technical and legalistic solutions to those with straightforward and simple messages; from campaigns based on protests and outrage to those prioritising constructive negotiation and engagement, and mixes of the two. In these examples, and many others, campaigners have achieved extraordinary successes, often against the odds.

Much of this can be planned for, although some factors are inevitably beyond your control. Luck is a key part of any campaigner's toolkit although you can increase your chances of being 'lucky' through careful design and implementation of your campaign and this is what this report is about.

## What is a campaign?

*Organised actions around a specific issue seeking to bring about changes in the policy and behaviours of institutions and/or specific public groups.*

This report is therefore aimed at anyone using their skills, judgement and energy to influence others in order to deliver positive social change (or in some cases to defend the status quo from attack). This very much includes people who may not consider themselves to be 'campaigners' but who are nevertheless involved in efforts to influence certain decision makers.

The report is intended as a straightforward guide, highlighting the key areas to consider in any campaign. In each section, we present some fundamental guidelines, draw on case studies (with text in boxes) and expose common pitfalls. In doing so, we have drawn from the literature as well as from our own and others' experience but because this is meant as a practical guide rather than an academic report, we cite sources in support of the points we are making in the appendix rather than in the main text.

## About the authors

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# Campaigning in context

In this report, we discuss elements that are likely to combine to help make any campaign effective. But whilst we believe these elements represent the key things for campaigners to consider, our analysis will only be valuable if it is used as a prompt, for people to consider the implications given their own particular situation. All campaigns are unique, all contexts different. It will be important for readers to eke out and translate the learning to their own specific campaigning contexts.

In other words, findings contained in this report do not preclude the need for campaigners to develop and implement their own tailored and coherent strategies for effecting change.

Processes and tools to support research, analysis and thinking in campaigning are outlined in various planning guides, some of which are referenced in the resources section at the end of this report. In these guides, campaigns are typically conceived as including stages of (a) design and development (b) strategising (c) planning, and (d) delivery, and tracking of progress. The following example of such a stage model is summarised and adapted from Campaigning Effectiveness's recent publication, *Campaigning in Collaboration*:

## 1. Analysing the issue and the environment

Building robust supporting evidence, so that you have good information, for example, on:

- Who are the decision makers (the targets);
- Which political players are likely to be supportive of your campaign, who may oppose it, and who may be persuaded either way;
- Whether public opinion is generally supportive of your campaign, or not, and whether this is likely to be a factor in the campaign;
- What resources for campaigning are available, and what constraints you face, within your organisation or group;
- What the solutions are that you will be calling for in the campaign; and
- Why others should support your suggested solutions.

## 2. Setting objectives

Identifying milestones on the route to achieving your campaigning goal, so that you can tell whether you are on track or not, and adapt accordingly as the campaign progresses.

## 3. Devising strategy

Determining the best routes to influence: who are your target audiences and what are the most appropriate ways for you to seek to influence them?

## 4. Planning

Devising the 'mix' of campaigning activities or 'tactics', tailored to the profile of your audience and your positioning. In most cases, actions are likely to run alongside one another and could include (for example) targeted lobbying, getting your message across to the media and organising campaign supporters to take action.

## 5. Making it happen

Delivering the campaign, keeping in mind a picture of what success would look like, and tracking progress towards it. Some kind of campaign evaluation can help build accountability and should also enable you to identify key lessons, enhancing effectiveness by using these to shape future campaigns.

# Tip 1: Select the issue that's right for you

## Introduction

Any decision about which issue to focus on should reflect the set of unique circumstances being faced. In making this decision, it's important to consider whether some of the factors likely to make an issue more winnable are in place. These include:

- **The existence of an identifiable problem and solution**  
If there's an obvious problem and a good case that resolving it will bring benefit, progress will be easier. And that's why most campaign and advocacy planning guides stress the need to spend time identifying problems and solutions before deciding on the issue.
- **The position of the target**  
Ideally the target will be receptive, vulnerable to pressure in some way and have the power actually to get things done. It helps if there is some support for your solution within the target institution, even if not actually from the decision maker.
- **The resonance of the issue with target audiences**  
The issue must stand out and it helps if a connection can easily be made between the problem and the solution you are advocating.

As well as taking these external factors into account, there is a need to consider the internal fit with your organisation. Likely elements to explore when thinking about **internal campaigning capacity** would include: available resourcing, the size (and quality) of your support, your power of sanction (can you make the target's life difficult if progress is slow?), and the quality of your campaign leadership. Clearly too there must be a **fit between the issue and the organisation's wider strategic priorities**.

The key factors, distilled, are **winnability** and **impact**. Is there a chance you can be successful? And if you do achieve your goal, are you confident it will make a significant positive difference to your beneficiaries/client group? In many cases, you may find that there is a trade off between these two questions; where this happens, the art of issue selection boils down to the balance between them.

*"Normally the task is to find the pieces of an issue or concern which are unacceptable to a big enough group of people to get the effect you need."*

**Chris Rose, environmental campaigner and consultant**

## Shelter's Million Children Campaign

Shelter's Million Children Campaign focused on a number of issues relating to poor housing. Its decision to focus the campaign on the plight of children in poor housing was in many ways an inspired choice. Amongst other things, it (a) skilfully tied the campaign to Government priorities (around the reduction of child poverty, for example) and at the same time (b) provided a message that could be easily and effectively communicated to both political and public audiences.

The campaign has achieved some significant policy results. For example, it has helped to persuade the Government to commit to building three million more homes by 2020, including a substantial increase in social rented homes. It has also contributed to moving the debate about social housing up the political agenda, building consensus around the need for increases in the numbers of affordable houses being built, for example. The campaign attracted widespread support and has been instrumental in enhancing Shelter's capacity to speak with a consistent voice.

This campaign was something of a hybrid, not quite an umbrella under which all Shelter's issues fitted, and more than a single-issue campaign. This had the advantage that a range of issues could be advanced through the campaign, and there was flexibility to react to, as well as set, policy agendas. The fact that some of Shelter's work could not be packaged within the campaign did cause some initial problems, but these were largely resolved during the course of campaign implementation.

**Based on an evaluation of Shelter's Million Children Campaign produced in spring 2007; thanks to Shelter for permission to draw on this research**

## Amnesty International and Host Government Agreements

In contrast, Amnesty International UK's campaign on investment agreements (reached between corporations involved in major infrastructure projects, such as pipeline construction, and the governments of the countries where this work is taking place) and their likely detrimental effect on Human Rights developed opportunistically. This was a classic case of attention to an issue evolving from a recognition that (a) there was a problem that needed fixing and (b) AIUK could play a unique and useful role in achieving this.

The decision to take up the issue followed from a joint NGO meeting on the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline at which other NGOs expressed concern that they collectively didn't have a good grip on the legal context. The issue of Host Government Agreements was highly technical and yet one with extraordinarily significant potential to hinder governments' ability to meet their Human Rights obligations. Amnesty International UK recognised that, of all the NGOs attending, they had the greatest legal expertise and could play a leading role to progress the issue.

### Human Rights Undertaking

As a result of campaigning around the issue, BP, the company involved, agreed to a 'Human Rights Undertaking', designed to ensure that host governments' Human Rights capacity would



not be undermined. Other significant achievements included securing movement on the issue by national governments and the World Bank. More recently, a Legal Advisor to Amnesty International UK's Economic Relations team has been appointed to work with the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Business & Human Rights, to examine for the UN the human rights dimensions of investment protection agreements.

Key to these successes, amongst other factors, was AIUK's perceptiveness in identifying the issue and its importance, and realising it was uniquely placed to campaign on it. However, the fact that this work evolved organically, from the recognition of a particular need, rather than from a clearly stated organisational commitment to prioritise work in this area has meant that AIUK has faced some difficulties in finding the capacity to sustain this work and build on its achievements.

Based on an evaluation of Amnesty International UK's work on investment agreements that we conducted (with Jeremy Smith) in 2006; thanks to AIUK for permission to draw from the report produced

## Some common pitfalls

- **Being over-ambitious**

Probably the most common mistake in our experience at the issue selection stage is for campaigners to be over-ambitious (see also Tip 4). The risk in this is that the issue becomes overwhelming, difficult to communicate and to manage, and no progress is made. You need to match your aspirations to your resources. It's true that some ideas that were almost unimaginable – such as the abolition of slavery, and women's suffrage – have come to fruition through campaigning. And it may be that you decide the issue is not winnable in the medium term but is so important that you have to make a stand on it. That is fine as long as you have thought out the consequences, a key one being that these kinds of commitments need to be for the long term (see also Tip 9).

- **Are you selecting the issue or having it selected for you?**

Reacting to something already on the agenda tends to be easier than trying to put it there; each approach can be viable, they just have different challenges. One problem with reacting to others' initiatives (government consultations etc.) is that it is easy to confuse access with influence. The target can sometimes set quite a restricting agenda, and may have delay, rather than resolution in mind. It may be appropriate to participate in these kinds of consultation processes, if they are on an issue of concern, but in general this should be part of a wider strategy, not a strategy for change in itself.

- **No external rationale**

The basic tenet for selecting any issue is that there must be an obvious external rationale for campaigning on it, and ideally a sense of urgency around the issue. Campaigns driven by internal opinion about what's important but without links to external agendas tend to lack an obvious point. We have seen several examples, especially more recently, of 'campaigns' that are developed not for the urgency of the issue or its importance to beneficiaries but because they are attractive for fundraising and supporter recruitment purposes. Whilst it can be possible for campaigning and these kinds of organisation aims to be advanced in tandem, it is important that any marketing aims don't overwhelm or obscure your objectives relating to policy or behaviour change.

# Tip 2: Compile strong and compelling evidence

## Introduction

Strong and compelling evidence is the bedrock of your campaign. You may be experts in your field through your experience of working on the issue, and this gives you a legitimacy to campaign on it. However, the quality of campaign evidence and how it is presented is of the utmost importance. Good evidence should be:

- **Robust**

Gather data and facts and check them thoroughly. Be truthful and do not exaggerate details to make a case. The campaign target may well have advisers and experts on hand, who will go through any evidence with a fine toothcomb, identifying flaws and this will both damage your case and your credibility as an organisation. Ensure sources are reliable and back up claims with expert opinion wherever possible, this is vital for targets to take your case seriously. When using research, especially from external sources, be sure you know how it was conducted (know what methodology was used). Also, be careful when using parts of research selectively in your campaign that you do not misrepresent findings because you wish to stress specific points.

- **Relevant**

Stick to the issue and be as focused as possible. The target will have limited time to analyse evidence and will inevitably receive a good deal of it from other organisations, opposition and other interested parties. Identify the key points of concern and try wherever possible to link evidence to the existing priorities of the targets. If it can be packaged to fit their existing agendas, it is more likely to be accepted for consideration (especially in times when Government departments are under enormous pressure to meet targets).

- **Practical**

Offer realistic alternatives wherever possible. Targets are likely to be very busy people, so it is not enough just to bemoan the state of the world - try to find precedents for your proposed solutions (where has it been done before, what were the results, what benefit could it offer the target? Or what damage will they have to clear up later if this course of action is not followed?) Many people in political or official positions are averse to taking risks. By demonstrating that others have taken the risks before, and there have been positive benefits, you are offering them a potential win rather than a series of problems.

- **Compelling**

Don't forget the voluntary sector's greatest asset – direct experience of working with beneficiaries. People's real-life experiences of the issue can be powerful and persuasive. If combined with well-researched facts, this can provide a winning combination.

- **Well Presented**

Do some research on the targets, find out how they prefer to receive information, and package evidence accordingly. Make sure that any reports include a summary, references (list the sources for the data – where did you get the information from?) and recommendations, and date the evidence.

## Lydd Airport Campaign

The Lydd Airport Action group (LAAG) was formed by local people on Romney Marsh in Kent to prevent the expansion of their small local airport into a major regional airport capable of handling large jet aircraft and up to two million passengers a year. The airport is enclosed by the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and next to the RSPB's oldest bird reserve. It is also less than three miles from Dungeness Nuclear Power Station. Local people are worried that the expansion will endanger wildlife, produce noise pollution and pose a security risk to the nuclear power station capable of endangering much of South East England.

The campaign is currently ongoing and the issue far from settled. However, LAAG have proved an outstanding example of a small local group punching well above its weight – using a combination of demonstrable public support alongside high quality expert evidence to make a forceful case that regulatory authorities are finding impossible to ignore.

Louise Barton, Chair of LAAG believes the key to success to date has been the following:

### **Demonstrating local support**

Backers of the airport scheme claimed local people supported large-scale expansion. But, using provisions of Part III of the Local Government Act to obtain a Parish referendum, this was proved false as the expansion plans were overwhelmingly rejected.

### **Obtaining a thorough understanding of the planning process and the hierarchy of decision-making**

LAAG obtained regular technical advice from Southeast Planning Aid and CPRE (Campaign for the Protection of Rural England) to track the planning application in detail at every stage. This has enabled them to make their case at the beginning of each phase rather than trying to influence after decisions have been made.

### **Finding 'killer' evidence**

LAAG realised that taking the moral high ground was not enough as planners expect local people to object on grounds of noise and nuisance (the so-called 'Not in My Back Yard' or NIMBY syndrome). LAAG scrutinised the planning documents for contradictions and inadequacies and systematically exposed inaccurate or inflated claims about the supposed benefits of the expansion. For example they researched the number of jobs produced by similar airport expansion schemes to refute the claim it would provide massive employment locally and they uncovered Government and European guidelines on minimising aircraft risk to nuclear installations. This helped mobilise local communities and the local media. Research was carried out using the Internet, with support from voluntary organisations and academic institutions and through building strong alliances with allies such as the RSPB and CPRE. Good alliances have been essential to the campaign's success so far.

### **Commissioning expert advice**

LAAG commissioned recognised experts at specific stages of the planning process to produce technical evidence. They employed an aviation expert to verify what LAAG believed were intended flight paths over densely populated residential areas not out to sea as had been claimed. LAAG then commissioned a leading nuclear safety consultant with experience of advising governments to examine the safety of the proximity to the power station. His expert view is that the airport proposals exceed Government safety guidelines by a factor of 20! Most recently, LAAG have commissioned a leading environmental law firm to examine whether the current planning application process needs to be revised to comply with EU habitats law. This could set a precedent for other groups in future to use.

It may seem too expensive for local groups to use such experts but LAAG is based in a relatively deprived part of Kent so the campaign does not have enormous financial resources. Yet LAAG believes in this case it is money well spent:

*“expert findings cannot be easily dismissed. If we say something as amateurs, we can be dismissed but expert opinion carries weight and it is surprisingly affordable. Rather than spending all our hard-raised funds on PR, demos and leaflets etc. We’ve used some of the money on expert opinion and so far it’s paying off. We asked charities about experts they know, researched them on the internet and agreed a fixed fee”.*

## Alzheimer’s Society – Access to drugs campaign

The Alzheimer’s Society is running a campaign to ensure that all people with dementia who can benefit from Alzheimer’s drug treatments can access them on NHS prescription. Although the drugs make a significant difference to quality of life for thousands of people with dementia, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence’s (NICE) has ruled that only those in the moderate stages of the disease should be prescribed the drug treatments. NICE made their ruling on the basis that the drug treatments cost too much, at £2.50 per person per day. This ruling means that the NHS can refuse Alzheimer’s drug treatments to those in the early and later stages of the disease in England and Wales.

### Evidence

The Alzheimer’s Society campaign is a good example of a charity combining both expert, rigorous technical and scientific evidence alongside demonstrating the human impact of the issue. For example, the Society carried out a survey in 2003 of over 4,000 people with dementia and their carers, which supported the position that Alzheimer’s drugs should be available on the NHS. Thus, the Society is proving its legitimacy to campaign on this issue to decision-makers at two levels; technical/expert and operational/representative experience.

This dual track evidence has been effectively used in the Society’s submission to the House of Commons Health Select Committee. Here, the Society demonstrated its medical and scientific knowledge of the issue but also called for NICE to be able to accept evidence from patients and carers on its own merits. The Society also took the NICE Ruling to Judicial Review in the High Court on June 25th with the aim of forcing NICE to reconsider - they are awaiting the Court’s ruling. Throughout the campaign the Alzheimer’s Society have put real people’s experiences at the heart of their message and involved patients, carers and supporters in campaign actions such as mass demonstrations, lobbying MPs, postcard and letter writing campaigns. Statements such as this are moving and compelling and ensure the campaign keeps a high profile with targets:

*“These drugs have given me so much. I used to wander lost and confused but now I can play with my grandchildren, tell my wife I love her and do things for myself again. This is a priceless gift”.*

**Keith Turner, a person with Alzheimer’s disease.**

We should not underestimate how powerful the combination of human direct experience and robust, technical evidence can be. Campaign targets are human beings too.

## Some common pitfalls

Unfortunately, good evidence is only part of the formula required for success in campaigning. Much rests on external factors and influences over which you have no control e.g. the state of public opinion on your issue, political timing, who else has a more powerful claim on the targets. At least though, by ensuring evidence is as good as possible you are maximising chances of success.

Common mistakes are:

- **Little direct experience of the issue**

VCOs choose an issue to campaign on but have little experience of it and cannot link their own research/policy to it. It begs the question – why choose this issue if you have little proven legitimacy? Is the organisation jumping on a bandwagon perhaps?

- **Evidence doesn't stand up to expert scrutiny**

The VCO has cobbled together outdated facts and used them selectively to exaggerate a campaign point. Government officials and other experts will demolish this evidence. The VCO loses credibility (and may not know it!) and if an intermediary has been used to convey the evidence (for example an MP to a Minister) their reputation is also damaged and they will not think of you kindly again.

- **Superficial evidence**

Where VCOs have a paucity of field-based research and analysis, the risks are that you can get so far but then are left exposed during dialogue over the detail. Many VCOs fall down at this point. Always know where you can go to if you need to get deeper, more detailed research (it may be another organisation) and be prepared to act swiftly. Otherwise potential gains can be undermined by opponents who are better prepared.

## Tip 3: Understand targets and audiences and track what's going on

Evidence shows us that the most successful campaigns have a good understanding of the political dynamic they are trying to influence, whether it is the EU, the UK Government, the Scottish Parliament or a local authority. It is common sense really. How can you make busy decision-makers sit up, notice your campaign and act to change policies or practice, if you do not know how the system works? It is important to get knowledge about the formal and informal political structures, the decisive moments to intervene and the most effective influence routes. As a minimum, your campaign should plan for the following:

- **Be clear who the targets are**  
Find out who makes the decisions and at what levels (often there is more than one decision maker in the chain). How do they stand on your issue?
- **Identify influence routes**  
How can you get to the key decision-makers? You may be fortunate and have direct access; often though you will have to go through others (for example local authority committees, civil servants, special advisors, MPs). So think creatively, identify the official routes and the appropriate entry points for your campaign but also the unofficial routes – for example any personal contacts; perhaps use trustees, other organisations, shared interest groups etc. Having multiple entry points is useful if you are being blocked by officials and you need to get to your target from other angles. Draw up an ‘influence map’ to help capture this information.
- **Do a ‘power analysis’**  
Brainstorm the influencers of your main target and decide if they are friends (so you can involve them), foes/opponents (be wary how much you give away about your campaign strategy!) or ‘floaters’ (do they need persuading?). Consider the strength of your position in light of this information – how can you bring allies together in support and how can you minimise your opponents influence?
- **Match your tactics and communications to the target audiences**  
Segment the audiences and ensure the tactics are suitable for the people you are trying to influence. What works for a ‘floating’ MP will be different from how you engage local multi-faith networks for example. And it’s worth spending time understanding better ‘where people are’ on the issue: your initial assumptions about the best ways to reach and communicate with different audiences may not be right.

You need to be able to **monitor progress** and be sure messages and contact with targets is co-ordinated (e.g. to avoid embarrassing duplications or mixed messages). For this you need a means of capturing and maintaining the campaign contact intelligence. Particularly important is **keeping a record of political intelligence** – this can contain contact details of targets, and other friends, foes and floaters.

Note down who has contacted them, when, for what and the outcome (did they pledge action for example – if so you need to follow up later), track if they change role within their organisation (you may need them later) and if they do anything positive or negative on your issue.

Some organisations use manual systems. Others use more sophisticated databases. Whatever system you choose it should be maintained regularly during the course of the campaign and updated. Use it to track progress during the campaign and to assist planning for future campaigns.

It should be the ‘property’ of the organisation so that, if key staff members leave, the organisation’s vital political intelligence has not gone with them. Treat campaign intelligence with the same respect as fundraising contacts/databases.

*“Particularly locally it is really important to understand how it all works and what can be realistically achieved, for example, knowing how the local authority works, how the Local Strategic Partnership works, who is the chair of the decision-making body and so on.”*

**Campbell Robb, Director Office of the Third Sector**

## Rethink

Rethink is a leading mental health membership charity, working to help everyone affected by severe mental illness recover a better quality of life. A top priority for the charity recently has been lobbying Government for improvements to the Mental Health Bill, which passed its stages in Parliament in June 2007. The Bill was complex and multi-faceted and Rethink campaigns staff realised they needed to be highly co-ordinated in their approaches to decision-makers. They also recognised the importance of tracking target attitudes and actions on the Bill as it progressed. To facilitate this and ensure the team were co-ordinated despite their heavy and sometimes frenetic workloads, campaigns staff set up a shared spreadsheet to log and monitor campaign contacts. Jane Harris, Head of Campaigns and Media said the system is now working well but was not without its teething problems:

*“at first we had some IT problems as we all had different short-cuts to the system and it wasn’t working well. Now it’s up and running it’s a really useful tool. Whenever a staff member has a meeting with a decision-maker or influencer, any kind of target we input who had the meeting, with whom, for which campaign focus and the target’s reaction – either flagged as positive, neutral or negative. We also note on the system links to any relevant accompanying documentation such as meeting notes and their source.”*

Individual campaigners at Rethink use the spreadsheet to keep a watching brief on their own campaigns and try to detect why targets are responding in different ways. They scan the information to consider whether changes of tactic are required and to spot trends early on. Monthly meetings are planned to review the campaign contact intelligence as a team.

At the moment the system is restricted to campaigners and policy staff but hopefully it will soon also include the Chief Executive and eventually Rethink’s important service delivery directorate. This is particularly important for their work on the next phase of the Mental Health Bill campaign where staff from the Services Directorate will be heavily involved in detailed discussions with targets about implementation measures

Jane Harris thinks the system has thrown up some interesting issues about campaigner performance too

*“we are used to being judged on positives; in fact a driving force for setting up the system is that we are expected now to report quarterly on our objectives. The spreadsheet helps monitor progress towards these but staff have had to get used to also capturing information about when things are not going well so we can alter course. We are not used to recording negatives so it’s been a change of culture to get us used to this”.*

## Influencing behaviour on climate change

Any campaigns that seek - as part of the campaign or as end purpose – to change people’s behaviour need to understand and accommodate the complexities involved in this.

Once you have prioritised the areas where behaviour needs to change, it’s important to understand what the barriers to change are within different audiences. Resistance to change tends to be highest where behaviour is habitual, where existing behaviour is accepted by peers and in line with social attitudes, and where there is no personal benefit to changing, and possibly an actual or perceived cost.

Hence the difficulties in promoting reductions in car use and flying, where the evidence is that people tend to underestimate the impact of their own actions and also to dismiss the need to change behaviour when it involves doing unwelcome things. This is compounded by factors such as habit, inertia, and a tendency to put off decisions. Plus in this case, responsibility is diffuse, and it is easy for people to think that what they do makes no difference. In fact the combination of describing the problem in stark terms – ‘10 years to save the world’ – and promoting small-scale solutions – ‘turn off the light when you leave the room’ – has only served to help create a sense of disempowerment.

None of this is helped when the behaviour of the messenger is inconsistent with the message. Perhaps not surprisingly, for example, some reactions to the Live Earth concert focused on how many miles the various musicians involved travelled in private jets, undermining the credibility of broader message somewhat.

What’s critical is that people’s motivations are adequately understood. That way, appropriate interventions to overcome barriers to change can be developed. And information is only one – often overused - tool in this. Communications on climate change may (sometimes) inform people or even help change attitudes but this will not necessarily affect behaviour. As Chris Rose notes (in his newsletter),

*“Strategically many ngos and agencies are still campaigning at the level of giving information, often of the ‘go and make informed choices’ variety. What people need ... is products”.*

In other words, viable opportunities to act need to be created, and there are numerous successful examples of this happening; for example:

- In Aylesbury, a tailored marketing campaign promoted the bus service with the message “every ten minutes”, with smartly-designed materials distributed to all residents living within five minutes of the route. This was supported by targeted advertising – including an offer of a free ticket for those who had not previously used the service - and range of attempts to increase the visibility of the service. As a result, passenger numbers increased by a third.
- The Dutch-based NGO Hier Project promotes the European website [www.topten.info](http://www.topten.info) which (as Chris Rose points out),

*“does not tell you to learn about climate change or ... to carefully read the labels and figure out the often confusing ‘consumer information’ about which light bulb, car, fridge or DVD to buy. Instead it gives you a clear and understandable ranking of many consumer product categories, endorsing the best performers on a regularly updated basis”.*



- Global Action Plan's eco-teams operate a community-level programme, supporting small group of households who work jointly to set their own goals around transport use and other climate reduction initiatives, and meet to share experiences and discuss progress. This group-led initiative has resulted in sustainable reductions in car and energy use.

These all represent different responses but have in common the fact that they begin where people are and seek to find creative and appropriate ways to address existing barriers to change, and get round them by communicating practical solutions and devising a programme of action that supports their implementation.

Examples cited here relate to initiatives targeting various 'public audiences'; politicians are human beings and so the general principles apply when communicating with and engaging influentials too.

This analysis is from Miranda Lewis' new book, *States of Reason*; examples cited are drawn from same source and from Chris Rose's campaignstrategy.org Newsletter #31

## Some common pitfalls

- **Political opponents are often better prepared than the voluntary sector**  
Often they have a clearer understanding of the political dynamic and better political intelligence. Clearly they are usually better resourced to obtain this but voluntary organisations do themselves no favours if they neglect this area. From our experience, few organisations have adequate political intelligence systems in place. They might engage in detailed and well-informed debate internally but it tends to be informal, undocumented and relatively narrow (e.g. related to specific lobbying tactics). The intelligence is not organisationally 'owned' and disappears when key staff members leave.
- **There is a tendency to 'preach to the converted'**  
Campaigners automatically go to the same MPs for campaign buy-in each time, for example. Carrying out a thorough power analysis and influence map might identify new and unlikely but strong influence routes.
- **Targets, Government in particular, are increasingly sceptical that activism actually reflects public opinion**  
VCOs are not always clear why they are using particular audiences to try to influence targets. There is a tendency always to engage every potential audience – members, supporters, youth etc. – on every campaign. Being more strategic would perhaps have more impact with targets.
- **The target audience should not be the 'general public'**  
The 'public' consists of numerous diverse groups of people and individuals with different interests and motivations. It is unlikely that any campaign will capture everyone and it is even questionable whether it would make much difference if it did (since sheer numbers do not equate with campaign success). This blanket approach is also wasteful of scarce resources. One campaign, by a very large international organisation, even had the target audience defined as 'population of the world'! Having identified your key audiences (those that are influential), you need to communicate in ways that advance your cause: just trying to inform people and 'raise awareness' about your issue is unlikely to deliver the results you hope for.

## Tip 4: Be clear what you are trying to achieve

### Introduction

Clear goals can help any campaign, assisting you to use limited resources in the most effective way possible by keeping effort focused on securing the change you are seeking. As part of this, you should:

- **Clearly identify your target and what you want them to do**  
It's only when you've done this that you can best work out how to influence them to act; you should have clear political and policy solutions and a clear target and timeframe;
- **Prioritise**  
You can't tackle everything, so be realistic and define objectives within your capability;
- **Combine short- and long-term objectives**  
The best campaigns often have a mix of narrow policy objectives (stepping stones towards the overall goal deliverable in a shorter timescale) and more long-term goals (these can be more aspirational and visionary and may take decades even to achieve);
- **Recognise that change can be multi-faceted**  
Building the capacity of others to advocate on an issue may be a significant outcome in itself, for example: if so, it makes sense to include this as an objective, along with any policy/behaviour change objectives you are seeking.
- **But don't lose sight of the point of the campaign**  
Your objectives should clearly state specific changes to policy or practice and lead to concrete outcomes that benefit your client base. 'Raising awareness' and 'building a support base' is a means to this end, not the end in itself.
- **Ensure that your objectives are well founded**  
Clarity on its own is not enough, your objectives should be based on clear thinking around how you anticipate change will actually come about. In other words, you should have thought about the stages of change that your campaign is designed to deliver and reviewed this to ensure that the 'logic' behind the campaign is compelling and convincing.
- **Be ready to adapt your objectives as the campaign evolves**

Objectives should be a tool, not a straightjacket. Campaigns benefit from a clear influencing strategy being in place from the start and any such strategy should be derived from clear goals. But campaigns can be fast moving and you should be willing to review and revise your objectives during the course of the campaign whenever there are good reasons to do so.

*"We developed six demands, some of which we knew we could win within the year and others which were setting a base for future campaigns, building on the energy that we already had."*

**Alison Marshall, former Make Poverty History Co-ordination Team Member. Quoted in Campaigning in Collaboration, Sarah Shimmin and Gareth Coles**

## Age Concern Cambridgeshire

Age Concern Cambridgeshire's experiences with older people revealed that inadequate feeding in hospital was a major issue for patients and their carers in the county. They decided to get involved with Age Concern England's national campaign 'Hungry to be Heard' which discovered that poor feeding and lack of help for patients who cannot feed themselves results in six out of 10 older people being at risk of becoming malnourished, or their situation getting worse, in hospital.

### Change in culture and practice

At the national level Age Concern England identified that legislative change or new guidance to NHS Trusts were not the solution (core standards have been in place for hospital food and patient care since 2004), but a change in culture and practice within the NHS was. Campaign demands (objectives) nationally therefore focused on exposing the extent of the scandal through the media to put pressure, along with lobbying, on the Department of Health and the Healthcare Commission to drive change.

At the local level, the charity translated campaign objectives into a practical action plan that NHS Trusts can implement called 'Hungry to be Heard' – 'Seven Steps to end malnutrition in Hospitals'. The seven steps included ensuring that hospital staff listen to older people, their relatives and carers and act on what they say; all ward staff must become 'food aware'; older people must be assessed for the signs or danger of malnourishment on admission and at regular intervals during their stay; and the ward should introduce 'protected mealtimes'.

Age Concern Cambridgeshire realised they needed buy-in from the NHS Trust to get real change on the ground. Ruth Rogers of Age Concern Cambridge met up with the Chief Dietician and the Assistant Chief Nurse of Addenbrooke's, a large teaching hospital, to make her case. She believes the materials produced for 'Seven Steps' were key to the Trust's positive response to the campaign. Two leaflets promoting the 'Seven Steps' were produced by Age Concern – one aimed at patients and staff responsible for feeding them, the other at patient's carers. The response from Addenbrooke's Hospital was really positive. They distributed the leaflets as a pilot to six care of the elderly wards (staff send them out to patients being admitted so also have repeat exposure to their messages). A mini audit later showed that 100% of respondents found them very useful. The Hospital is now fully supportive and will distribute the campaign leaflets to all care of the elderly wards routinely.

Ruth Rogers feels the campaign was well constructed because:

- At a national level Age Concern could expose the 'scandal' and take a more confrontational approach with national level authorities.
- The 'Seven Steps' provided a gentler, more insider tool for local campaigners. This meant that relationships locally could be safeguarded.
- The 'Seven Steps' presented the campaign's objectives as achievable, practical actions, not just publicising a problem. The NHS Trust was presented with a ready-made solution.

## Which? and pensions reform

Pension provision in the UK is a hugely complicated policy area, overdue for reform. As the final Turner Commission Report noted, “future policy needs to be based both on significant reforms to the state system and on a new approach to private pension saving”.

### Specific areas

In its campaigning on pensions, Which? has deliberately focused its goals on specific areas within this wide debate. Notably, over many years, Which? has highlighted its objective that the second tier pension scheme (supplementing the basic state pension) should be run and administered by some kind of National Savings Body which would then outsource actual management of investments to fund managers. This contrasts with the position of the finance industry that the best model would be for consumers to choose between different companies who would both administer and manage their accounts (i.e. so that the private sector runs the entire system themselves).

Decisions around the delivery mechanism of the second tier scheme may sound to some like a technical detail but are in fact central to arguments about the viability of overall pensions policy (given evidence for example of the public’s lack of trust in the finance industry, following past mis-selling scandals).

### Adapt to circumstances

For Which? to focus its main attentions on this area of pensions policy was the right strategic decision. Through matching objectives to resources by prioritising efforts and focusing only on key areas, and through vigilance and persistence, Which? has established itself as a recognised expert in the field. Analysis by the Pension Policy Institute, for example, indicates that Which? was one of the few organisations with coherent and thought-out proposals for the creation of the new second tier pension scheme even prior to the establishment of the Turner Commission.

Which? has also been prepared to adapt to circumstances. One of Which?’s initial objectives was that any scheme should be compulsory. This was strongly rejected by the Government and, after analysing the political reality, Which? assessed that subsequent movement on this was highly improbable. As a result, Which? changed tack and accepted self-enrolment by individuals to the scheme as a pragmatic alternative. This is an illustration of the fact that it is fine to change direction or adapt objectives if there is a clear external rationale for this; in fact, it is important that capacity to change in this way is built into campaign planning and management processes.

Which? clearly exerted considerable influence over the course of the pension campaign, with the importance of Which?’s role cited by the then Pensions Minister during the passage of the Pensions Bill. Which?’s pension model has been generally adopted although it is still not yet clear what the final outcome in new legislation will be as the detail is still being finalised.

Which?’s objectives were well founded, were based on effective prioritisation, had a compelling rationale, and have largely maintained their relevance to the external agenda throughout the course of the debate.

**From an evaluation we conducted of Which?’s campaigns and public affairs programme in early 2007; thanks to Ruth Mayne for her analysis on this issue and for Which? for permission to quote from our report**

## Some common pitfalls

Unfortunately, ways of having unclear and/or inappropriate campaign goals are legion.

Perhaps the most common approach is to have **unrealistically high and wide-ranging aspirations**. Whilst boldness and ambition can be positive features in campaigning, the danger is that this approach:

- Unbalances the focus of the campaign, and makes it difficult to prioritise where to focus effort;
- Can lead to problems down the line when wanting to disengage;
- Actually obscures intentions, so that sometimes it is not even clear to those involved what the campaign what is trying to achieve, and how;
- Makes it difficult to judge how successful and effective the campaign has been.

- **Lack of focus**

More generally is a common problem, in our experience. Even where goals are less expansive, there is sometimes no distinction made between a wide ranging set of policy positions and the actual policy objectives of the campaign. Again, this makes it difficult to prioritise or follow a clear campaign thread.

- **Unclear thinking about how change will be achieved**

Sometimes it is not clear from the objectives or any plan how it is anticipated that the desired change will come about. Sometimes a rationale is in fact laid out but it unravels under basic scrutiny. To take just one example to illustrate this, a US campaign to promote fruit and vegetable consumption – ‘five a day for better health’ - was initially based on the idea that if the message got through to people, they would change their behaviour (and eat more fruit and vegetables). However, after a few years, it was found that whilst there had been a significant increase in the proportion of Americans who understood the ‘five a day’ message, there had been no increase in consumption of vegetables and fruit. The basis for the campaign – that there would be a straightforward progression from knowledge to behaviour - was flawed. Many campaigns are similarly based on a simplistic or otherwise faulty notion of how change happens.

- **Campaigns that aren’t campaigns**

Sometimes so-called campaigns have no campaigning objectives at all, instead they are essentially marketing exercises dressed up in campaigning clothes (see also Tip 10).

- **Vague or unhelpful objectives**

There can be problems not only with the objectives themselves but also their usefulness. When evaluating campaigns, we commonly come across vague objectives that have been ignored or discarded during the course of the campaign, with organisations invariably claiming, after the event, that they never actually thought they would achieve them! In these circumstances, it’s not clear what the point of setting the objectives was supposed to be in the first place. Where there is a team of people working on a campaign, it becomes even more important to establish and communicate clear objectives, making sure everyone is clear about the key strategies to achieve them.

# Tip 5: Use a range of tactics according to the situation

## Introduction

As elsewhere, decisions about tactics will depend on the campaign, but there do seem to be some general rules:

- **Get the basics right**

As noted in Tip 2, the bedrock of any campaign is a sound understanding of the dynamics of change and a strong evidence base.

- **Adapt your tactics according to your resources and support**

The trick in campaigning is to put on a show of strength, or, failing that, to make yourself look as though your resources are impressive: as Saul Alinsky puts it: “First the eyes: if you have organised a vast, mass-based people’s organisation, you can parade it visibly ... Second the ears: if your organization is small in numbers, then do what Gideon did: conceal the members in the dark but raise a din and clamour that will make the listener believe that your organisation numbers many more than it does. Third the nose: if your organisation is too tiny even for noise, stink up the place” (Alinsky, 1989).

- **Keep the pressure on**

Through deploying different techniques, working with others if necessary to ensure you have a range and variety of tactics, targeting different audiences available to you; in a crowded field, look to innovate, to keep tactics fresh and noticeable;

- **Consider switching targets to exert additional leverage**

Especially if you are not making progress through the identified route.

- **Think carefully about your ‘positioning’**

The stance you take in relation to targets. Does the positioning fit with your organisation’s ethics and reputation?

- **Combine insider and outsider strategies**

In many situations it makes best sense to do this, or at least to carry with you the prospect of adopting a more confrontational approach, if you are not happy with progress being made on the issue, remembering that the threat can be more effective than the thing itself.

### Insider and outsider strategies

One useful way to think about your positioning in relation to your targets is on a spectrum from ‘insider’ to ‘outsider’. As Wyn Grant explains it, “Insider groups are regarded as legitimate by government and are consulted on a regular basis. Outsider groups either do not wish to become enmeshed in a consultative relationship with officials, or are unable to gain recognition. Another way of looking at them is to see them as protest groups which have objectives that are outside the mainstream of political opinion” (Grant, 2000, p19).

The key point is that tactics follow strategy – it's good to stay sprightly but what is essential is that you keep your eye on the ball and know when best to use different campaign methods and positioning with different audiences

*"Ask yourself every day, what is this campaign doing? What's the verb?"*

**Chris Rose, environmental campaigner and consultant**

*"The premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure on the opposition"*

**Saul Alinsky, Rules for Radicals, Rule #10**

*"Gather ten staff around a conference table or five activists around a kitchen table and where are they likely to start [campaign planning]? ... Tactics. But without a carefully planned and researched strategy, the actions they propose, no matter how creative or attention-grabbing, are not likely to achieve the results they want."*

**Interaction: Advocacy Toolkit Creating Campaigns that Change the World**

## Case studies



### ◀ Humour: Mark Thomas stunt

Humour can be a vital weapon in the toolkit, if delivered with purpose and when the situation is right. Stunts are best, as in this case, when they are underpinned by extensive factual research and investigative journalism techniques

**Photo: MarkThomas.info.com**

### Stark tactics: PETA advertisement ▶

Stark tactics can help generate media coverage; like PETA you need to be sure of your positioning, remembering that coverage is a means to an end, not an end in itself

**Photo: PETA**





◀ **Mobilising Support: Stop the War Coalition**

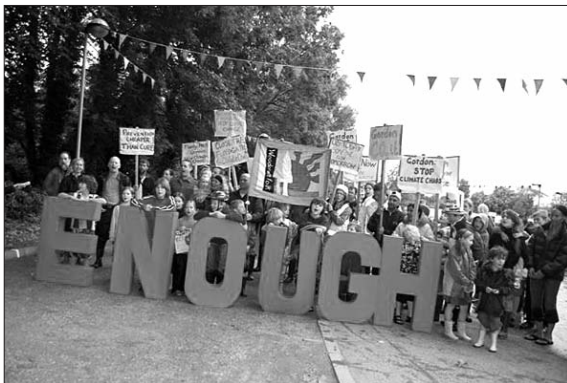
Mobilising support can be a powerful way for people to show solidarity with an issue, but mass demonstrations are not a substitute for a coherent, worked out strategy of influence

Photo: [www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk)

**Expert Evidence: Bretton Woods Project**

Campaigns don't always have to have a public face: being a provider of 'expert' evidence to parliamentary committees and government officials can mean that you effectively fight for your cause with facts

Photo: Bretton Woods Project



▲ **Opportunism: Floody Hell demonstrators**

Opportunism is vital and good timing essential: sometimes you need to move quickly to highlight your point as did this group of Oxford residents, in response to the recent flooding. A few days later and the media would have moved on

Photo: Ruth Mayne

**Unexpected messengers: CAFOD nun's and monk's lobby**

Using a new spin on an old tactic – in this case deploying unexpected messengers – can help throw your targets off guard

Photo: CAFOD





## Some common pitfalls

- **Straying from the narrow path of influence**

One of the most difficult balancing acts in campaigning is to stay on the narrow path between cooption and marginalisation. It is easy to be seduced into thinking you are having an influence simply by having been invited to the decision-making table, but you should not confuse access with results. At the same time, an ill-timed or intemperate intervention can do more damage than it brings benefit. Each decision must be taken on its own merits, depending on timing, the context and the issue. This requires effective leadership and a sound understanding of the costs and benefits of different possible responses.

- **Biting the hand that feeds you**

The situation is further complicated when funding comes from your possible campaign targets. To minimise conflicts of interest and avoid being seen as compromised, every organisation must consider what kind of ceiling should be put on receiving funding from such sources.

- **Getting swept up in the action**

In a fast moving campaign, it can become easy to concentrate on tactics without stopping to consider the strategic rationale for them: one-off protests can be important and effective but they should be seen as a component of, not a substitute for, a coherent and proactive programme of influence.

- **One size doesn't fit all**

It is easy too to draw the wrong lessons from others' successes. Generally speaking, if you see a particular tactic being effective, you should look to replicate the ways of working that generated the idea in the first place rather than repeating the tactic itself. Wherever possible, as Saul Alinsky says, your campaign should go outside of the experience of the target. Once a tactic has been deployed, by yourself or someone else, there can be diminishing returns in repeating it, keep innovating.

- **Always using public campaigning**

Public action can be deployed too undiscerningly perhaps to 'feed' a campaigner support base or because organisations are intent on recruiting new supporters from campaign actions (so is this really a campaign or a fundraising/PR drive?). Sometimes discrete influencing can work better and resource-intensive public campaigning is not always needed. And it can even be detrimental to your cause, for example, when a desired 'show of support' backfires because of lack of numbers.

## Tip 6: Involve beneficiaries

Increasingly, and justly in our view, campaign targets are challenging VCOs to demonstrate that the organisation's beneficiaries (or whatever term you choose to adopt – users, partners, clients etc.) have been involved in the campaign process. Beneficiary involvement is important for many reasons:

- **It is a source of legitimacy** for campaigns that strengthens the moral case for your issue. It is important that you clearly explain and demonstrate who you represent
- **Organisations need to resolve issues of campaign 'ownership'** as the UK political agenda increasingly demands their involvement in public service delivery. Who becomes a VCO's most important stakeholder then?
- **Problem analysis and solution setting require a deep involvement of beneficiaries to ensure they are appropriate** – in fact, beneficiary involvement at all stages is important to ensure the campaign is informed and nuanced by experience from those most affected. More meaningful participation can run throughout campaign development, planning, implementation and even evaluation.
- **It can help make hard-won change sustainable** – research on effective campaigns has shown how
 

*“long term grassroots involvement is essential to ensure real change of any type even after policy changes have been achieved ...the essential links between policy and project work”*  
(Chapman & Fisher, *The Thoughtful Activist*)
- **It provides the opportunity to consider issues of devolvement and disengagement** – if we are not a user-led organisation are we aiming to make ourselves redundant in the long-term and enable beneficiary groups to campaign on their own behalf – if so at what stage can this take place and how are we building this into campaign strategy?

### Southampton Centre for Independent Living

Southampton Centre for Independent Living (SCIL) is a non-profit organisation run and controlled by disabled people. It exists to campaign for full civil rights for disabled people and to provide practical services. SCIL is a peer led organisation and, according to Ian Loynes, this is a great advantage for participative campaigning “there is no distinction between staff and users, rather we are a group of disabled people sharing a common experience of discrimination and working to support each other. We can then apply the learning from these experiences to assist other disabled people around the country”.

### Peer-owned campaign strategy

Short and long-term volunteers and paid staff work together in groups at all stages of the campaigns. Issues are generated from the life experience of individuals, for example recent campaigns on good housing for disabled people, eligibility criteria and direct payments to give people more control over their lives have all stemmed from local experiences. These are then worked up in small groups, with individuals participating to the level they choose. Whether it is individuals who are more into direct action, or others more into working through meetings and discussion everyone can decide how they want to be involved.

The organisation uses its long-term experience, particularly on issues that have been around for a number of years, to inform each campaign group about what works as influencing tactics and to advise on strategy. Campaigns are rarely led just by staff rather they are mix of everyone. An example of this is the ongoing campaign on charging for social care services, an issue affecting many of SCILS team but initiated by a volunteer. This makes for an empowering campaigns environment. According to Ian Loynes, it is “unlike more traditional set-ups where volunteers may feel less important than paid staff or perceived ‘professionals/experts’ when sitting around the table to discuss and plan campaigns”.

Although campaign strategy is fully participative and peer-owned, campaigns do need to be consistent with SCIL’s charitable objectives and charity law. This may mean SCIL occasionally decides to withdraw from aspects of a campaign. SCIL also takes its experience to the national and international stage. Operating at this level necessitates staff having a firm grasp of policy issues and current campaigns. SCIL encourages group learning from campaigns to inform this and future activity – but even at this evaluation stage there is full participation from interested members of the SCIL team.

## **Shelter’s Million Children Campaign**

(see also page 6)

In a developing area for Shelter, the Million Children Campaign offered their clients a range of ways to get involved, with different levels of commitment. Service users provided evidence in support of the Campaign, including through the media, inputted views as to what the government should do to tackle the problem, and in some cases, lobbied and took campaigning action.

### **Beneficiary evidence**

For example, service users fed in their views to a major study of poor housing conducted by Shelter, the ‘Generation Squalor’ investigation, as well as to other reports and investigations carried out during the course of the Campaign. Children from families in London and Reading kept journals of their experiences, offering first-hand evidence of overcrowding, collated in the report ‘I am so crowded: This is my story’. This was presented to the Housing Minister, with children involved talking directly to the Minister about their experiences. Children in bad housing who had written poems for the ‘Waiting for the Future’ anthology also read those poems at a parliamentary event attended by government and opposition Ministers amongst others.

In campaigning terms, these involvements have been hugely beneficial to Shelter, the Journals for example proving an excellent vehicle to secure high-profile media coverage. The personal contact that Shelter was able to arrange between the families affected and the Housing Minister was a particularly powerful means to advance Shelter’s case.

## Involvement in campaign development

There has also been some service user involvement in campaign development, with clients surveyed for their views on answers to ending bad housing and homelessness, for example, during activities around Shelter's 2006 Day of Action. Service users have also been given the opportunity to indicate interest in future involvement in campaigning, with one in five clients indicating willingness to talk to the media, and a quarter interested in supporting future research projects. Based on these experiences, Shelter is currently developing thinking around possible ways to involve service users earlier in a campaign's lifecycle, in development and planning.

Building on these experiences, Shelter recognises that further enhancing service user involvement and participation in campaigning will help bolster Shelter's legitimacy as a campaigning organisation. And engaging the grassroots as partners in the change process – by encouraging and supporting clients to be active within tenants' associations for example – could also prove important as a means to helping to redress the political disempowerment of affected communities.

Based on an evaluation of Shelter's Million Children Campaign produced in spring 2007; thanks to Shelter for permission to draw on this research

## Some common pitfalls

- **VCOs' self-proclaimed campaign legitimacy can often be questionable**

On closer scrutiny, beneficiary involvement is sometimes superficial, amounting to little more than 'extractive' information gathering for case studies. Quite apart from being morally questionable, this leaves VCOs open to challenge from opponents. A purely extractive involvement may have consequences: "the very process of gathering this information and experience in order to influence policy change can itself be a ... disempowering process ... which in turn may undermine the very purpose of advocacy on their behalf" (Kelly, 2002). If you don't pay attention to this, you are likely to end up listening and being accountable to only the loudest voices (e.g. Funders) and not beneficiaries.

- **Meaningful involvement or ownership of campaigns by beneficiaries can be challenging**

It might create tensions and demand trade-offs in terms of agenda setting. For example, beneficiaries at grassroots level may not be aware of the 'whole picture' politically; consultation and involvement takes time – when sometimes you need to act swiftly; different beneficiary group may want to pursue tougher agendas than others etc. While these and many other challenges are time-consuming to resolve, they cannot be ignored. Some tensions can be partially addressed through good strategic planning, agreement of roles and responsibilities/ decision-making protocols and efficient transparent communications. VCOs should also consider if they need to invest over the long-term in developing the capacity and skills of beneficiaries in order for them to be able to participate more fully in campaigning on their own behalf.

- **VCO policy positions are sometimes insufficiently rooted in actual experiences**

They can unravel when negotiating with influencers over the detail and it may be difficult to be certain that what you are advocating would actually deliver sustained benefit.

## Tip 7: Find and work with useful allies

Increasingly VCOs are joining together in coalitions, alliances and networks to campaign on issues of mutual concern. The strength of numbers can doubtless strengthen campaign 'voice' if handled well and increase legitimacy. Targets, especially those in Government Departments are not just encouraging approaches from coalitions, but now expect to see this as proof of voluntary sector co-operation rather than competition.

There are several ways you can make your joint working in campaigns more effective:

- **Seek out allies from beyond the voluntary sector**

For example consider joining forces with trades organisations, trades unions, professional bodies, the corporate sector. Obviously these campaign partners need to operate in ways that are ethically consistent with your organisation's mission and ethics but unusual alliances get noticed in political circles so the effort is worth it.

- **Decide the exact nature of your joint working**

There are differences in terms of campaign buy-in and duties between networks, alliances and coalitions and it is important to be clear about what is expected from the structure. For example, it may be decided to just share information about each organisation's campaign timetables and events; partners may agree to go a stage further and sign up to joint campaign aims and demands, or relationships might be advanced enough to have a totally shared campaign platform with joint ownership of the campaign strategy and activities.

- **Establish common understanding amongst allies about purpose and parameters**

Whatever model of joint working you decide on it is important to be clear about responsibilities, duties and reporting mechanisms and build in ways of mediating disputes and being accountable to the group. Real benefits of joint working can be the division of labour, a wider skills base and more audiences/supporters to mobilise. Clear protocols for who does what, when and using which resources (for example whose supporter base) will assist efficient working and help relationships run more smoothly.

- **Trust and transparency are key**

So ensure you communicate frequently and openly.

- **Do not underestimate the importance of governance structures**

There can be tensions between decisive leadership and consensus decision-making, but a 'structured campaign' can help to build strong and sustainable relationships

### Asylum Vouchers Campaign

The Asylum Vouchers campaign showed that collaborations involving organisations from different sectors can be particularly influential. In April 2000, the UK Government introduced a new national voucher scheme for asylum seekers. Asylum seekers were to qualify for around 70% of standard benefit levels but would receive the vast majority of their benefit not in cash but in vouchers only redeemable in certain stores and for which no change could be given. A joint campaign by Oxfam, the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) and the Refugee Council opposing this scheme was instrumental in securing the scrapping of this voucher system within two years.

The coalition grew from opportunistic beginnings, when Oxfam GB and the Refugee Council asked permission to use a quote by Bill Morris, then General Secretary of the TGWU, on an action card for use in lobbying supermarkets. The action itself had limited effect, but the contact helped forge invaluable links between the three parties.

Following a powerful speech from Bill Morris, a motion to scrap the voucher scheme was passed unanimously at that year's TUC Conference, leading to an emergency motion at the Labour Party Conference a couple of weeks later. In response, Labour's National Executive Committee recommended a review of the scheme.

## Coalition partners

A joint submission produced by the coalition partners to this review delivered clear evidence of hardship and discrimination, generating media coverage and parliamentary debate. An announcement of the review findings was delayed until after the 2001 General Election, but that autumn, following sustained pressure, the declaration was made that the scheme was to be scrapped.

The relationship between Oxfam GB, the Refugee Council and the TGWU at the heart of the campaign worked because each organisation brought something additional and important to the table; and each recognised that none could achieve success alone. Working with the TGWU meant that the campaign benefited from enhanced political intelligence and access to influencing routes direct to the heart of Government. The unusual alliance of charities with a Trade Union (a substantial funder of many constituency Labour Parties) attracted the attention of a wider range of MPs who themselves then engaged in sustained lobbying within parliament.

## Trust

Underpinning the success of the campaign was that a strong trusting relationship grew between the key individuals involved. This meant being sensitive to the different organisations' working methods and constraints this sometimes imposed. Vitally, what held the groups together was the fact that they had a clearly defined common goal.

The campaign also successfully drew support from the Local Government Association, the British Medical Association and the Body Shop, amongst others, and this helped to create additional momentum for change.

Based on Jonathan Ellis, *More Than a Token Gesture: ngos and Trade Unions Campaigning for a Common Cause*, *Development in Practice*, Volume 14 #1 & 2, February 2004

## Host Government Agreements

[see also page 6]

Amnesty International UK's [AIUK] work on Host Government Agreements originated because the Amnesty team working on economic relations issues saw a role they could usefully fulfil since other ngos campaigning on the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline had limited legal and human rights expertise.

### Sharing knowledge

By getting involved, AIUK brought something new and additional. Apart from the fact that AIUK was able to address the Human Rights perspective and advise other ngos on some of the technical and legal issues, as a household name, Amnesty provided added credibility, profile and pressure on targets. AIUK also brought specific campaigning skills, including the capacity to produce high-quality research and impressive lobbying reach.

AIUK brought a clear and distinctive added value to the issue and made a different impact. But because the campaign was in an area that was not currently part of Amnesty's core area of expertise, AIUK benefited too from other ngos' knowledge: regarding the interrelationships between the companies involved in the project and the private banks and the International Financial Institutions funding it, for example.

In building sound relationships with groups with a longer track record on these issues ('IFI Watchers' such as the Bretton Woods Project and The Cornerhouse), AIUK proceeded with a degree of sensitivity and humility. In particular, staff were careful to ensure that targets were not able to use their relations with AIUK to undercut others' positions. This was done by assiduous in consulting at every step on the way.

### Striking a balance

Although, inevitably, not everyone on all sides was 100% happy at all times with the positions AIUK adopted on specific issues and questions, AIUK drew widespread praise for the balance it struck between engagement with companies and maintaining the support of ngos, suggesting the ability to engage in constructive dialogue without being co-opted, a notoriously difficult thing to get right. In achieving this, AIUK's staff combined a willingness to listen and learn from others with an astute strategic sense of how best to exert influence.

As with the vouchers case study highlighted above, what underpinned the approach was, crucially, a deeply-held commitment to working in networks as the best way forward, and recognition that this meant dedicating sustained effort in this direction. As well as working with those already involved on the issues, importantly, AIUK invested a lot in stimulating others to take up the issues and was tireless in seeking to create 'clusters of contacts' to ensure continued and growing NGO engagement.

Based on an evaluation of Amnesty International UK's work on investment agreements that we conducted (with Jeremy Smith) in 2006; thanks to AIUK for permission to draw from the report produced.

## Some common pitfalls

- **Lowest common denominator campaigning**

Because everyone in the group cannot agree, or cannot get organisational sign-off, there is the danger that everyone sticks to the corporate line and campaign statements and demands sink to the lowest common denominator. This is a frequent complaint of campaign targets – that coalition solutions become too broad and unspecific. This means decision-makers either dismiss them as just bland wish-lists or happily sign up to them because they do not pin anyone down to specific actions (and therefore achieve very little practical outcome).

- **Competitiveness**

Joint working can become very resource intensive and distracts from campaign focus, especially if organisations become 'precious' and protectionist about their own 'brand'. For joint working to be effective, organisations should be willing to subsume their own identity for the benefit of the greater good. This appears to be extremely difficult for many organisations and begs the question – what are you doing this for? Is it to get results for your beneficiaries or simply to promote your own organisation and build the supporter base?

- **The coalition 'habit'**

Alliances and coalitions are now the norm in campaigning – it is important to ask 'when does it add value?' Politicians and Government departments like dealing with coalitions etc. As it is more convenient for them to be lobbied by one 'organisation' than many. But they are only effective if they truly provide a stronger and more focussed voice.



## Tip 8: Communicate well and persistently

When communicating to audiences remember the four P's:

### 1. Pitch

Communication is a two way process so you need to absorb and reflect audience perspectives by pitching the message at the right level. For example, a tabloid newspaper audience will respond better to emotive human interest stories with lots of descriptive 'colour'; while a government department official may require more factual, clearly sourced information in, for example, a short report or Q & A format.

### 2. Positioning

Decide the stance you are taking in the campaign and how you wish to be perceived by targets – where do you sit on the insider/outsider spectrum (see page 20). Your communications, whether face to face, printed publications or lobbying need to be consistent with the agreed positioning.

### 3. Presentation

The issue needs to be compelling - why is action needed now? Why is this more important than anything else? But without overstating the case in ways that damage your credibility. This is especially true when you need to repackaging ongoing, long-term campaigns to give them new life. The voluntary sector is in the favoured position of being able to speak with moral authority on issues it campaigns for though so a careful combination of the moral and a strong business case for change can be especially powerful. The source of the message can be as important as the content so think about the media you use, the people who deliver the message and the physical presentation – is it clear what you are asking for?

### 4. Persistence

Targets are bombarded with thousands of (often conflicting) messages every day. You need to penetrate their radar so as well as having powerful and well-targeted messages you need to repeat them over and over to have a chance of being heard. Try to hit targets from many different sides with the same message – layer the tactics to make as much 'noise' as possible within a defined timescale. This is also the most efficient use of resources.

*"Sometimes when organisations keep packaging their arguments differently, it can get confusing. You think, is that what they were talking about before? If you are trying to influence busy people you need to keep focused on what you want, make sure you're talking to the right people, and keep coming back to the key points".*

**Ruth Potter, Councillor, City of York**

## Framing the issue

One cited reason for the success of the international campaign to ban landmines (discussed on page 36) was that those who were campaigning against landmines took the argument away from the technical experts – by describing landmines in terms of a humanitarian, not a military, issue. By keeping the focus of the debate on the practical consequences of real human suffering and away from arguments relating to the theory of warfare and deterrence (the preferred realm of government experts) campaigners pushed the issue higher up and further along the political agenda (*this analysis is taken from the Good Campaigns Guide and derived from Hubert's evaluation of the campaign*).

## Reconstruct the debate

Similarly, progress on restricting smoking in the USA (discussed on page 37) advanced when it was reframed as an issue of passive smoking, rather than simply an individual behavioural problem (Salmon et al, 2003). This reconstruction of the debate helped to gain support from larger segment of society, as it transformed people's understanding of their interest in the issue in the UK, similarly, this aspect of the debate has come to the fore more recently, with the rights of workers in bars and clubs highlighted as a rationale behind the recent smoking ban in public places.

There are numerous examples from across the world of how effective reframing can be. In the Philippines, for example, recognising a national belief in children as central to the family, and facing opposition from the Catholic Church, family planning groups promoted their case with the message *"If you love them, plan for them"*. Making the case that planning did not mean avoiding having children but caring for each child better. As a result, contraceptive use increased (Piotrow & Kincaid in Rice & Atkin, 2001). Those seeking change describe what was once routinely referred to as "female circumcision" as "female genital mutilation" in order to put proponents of the practice at a disadvantage in policy debates (cited in Salmon et al, 2003).

Similarly, Barnardo's has battled for years to challenge the term "child prostitutes", promoting the counter message that a more accurate way to describe the situation was of vulnerable children being abused. Often reframing will require great tenacity and persistence: one group's efforts to advance the claim that 'young offenders are children too' made little progress, for example, given the short (18 month) timespan of the campaign (Coe, Fricke & Kingham, 2004).

Framing a winning issue entails defining the debate in terms compelling to those you seek to persuade and influence and which limit the opposition's ability to mobilise its own forces (Covey, 1995). The trick is to describe the issue in ways that make it more likely you will persuade people and stimulate them to act:

*"An effective frame must show that a given state of affairs is neither natural nor accidental, identify the responsible party or parties and propose credible solutions"*

Keck & Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 1998

## War on Want

War on Want's 'Fashion Victims' campaign exposes the poor working conditions in factories in Bangladesh which supply garments to stores such as Tesco, Primark and Asda. Despite decades of charities campaigning on similar issues, War on Want felt the link between low prices in the UK and bad working conditions overseas had been lost to public consciousness over recent years. In part they believe this is because of a creeping acceptance that globalisation is a positive force for the Third World and partly as an unfortunate by-product of some charity trade campaigns which implicitly suggest that poor countries simply need the capacity to trade their way out of poverty.

War on Want wanted to resurrect the issue - but not by creating a traditional consumer campaign asking the stores to adhere to voluntary codes of conduct. War on Want saw the campaign as part of challenging the power corporations have in the global economy and conveying the need for regulatory frameworks that forces compliance with decent working conditions.

### Multi-layered communications strategy

This posed a considerable communications challenge for a medium sized charity but War on Want's sophisticated and multi-layered communications strategy ensured the campaign has received considerable and sustained exposure at several influential levels:

- The media department worked co-operatively with the BBC and the Guardian newspaper in the run-up to the launch of the report 'Fashion Victims: The true cost of cheap clothes at Primark, Asda and Tesco'. The report was published on the day of the annual general meeting of Primark's parent company, Associated British Foods and resulted in rolling BBC coverage on TV and radio throughout launch day and a front-page Guardian article. Other mass media, including the Daily Mail and the Independent took up the issue as well as the industry/commercial press. The media coverage has rumbled on since with the workers rights/cheap clothes message now being used as a reference point by journalists, for example when celebrities bring out a new store clothing range.
- Key War on Want staff, often alongside trade union allies, presented their case face to face with representatives of the target stores. Perhaps as a result of media coverage and public interest they have witnessed obvious changes of stance from some targets (Asda being most responsive).
- War on Want submitted evidence to the House of Commons International Development Committee for their enquiry on "Challenges and Limits on Fair Trade". Committee members later used the submission to cross-examine witnesses from Tesco.
- War on Want's Company Secretary (a leading lawyer) ingeniously gave the campaign a new twist by deciding to put a motion forward to Tesco shareholders at the company AGM. Initially rebuffed by Tesco, his legal expertise enabled him to spot an opportunity in the Companies Act where it states that if there are 100 shareholders with an average of 2000 shares each you can force your resolution onto the agenda of the company AGM. Using appeals via the Guardian and other outlets individual shareholders came forward to help. Eventually with the support of a few very large shareholders and numerous individuals owning one or two shares the required quota was reached. The resolution was then circulated to all shareholders with the notice to the AGM along with Ben Birnberg's supporting statement. As a result, the campaign became very much a 'live' issue at the

AGM with major City and church investment advisors rallying in support. Although the resolution was not passed it attracted considerable support on the day and a plethora of new publicity, hitting new and influential audiences.

The Fashion Victims campaign has not yet reached fruition but it serves as an excellent example of how a relatively small organisation can punch far above its weight. Through strategic, creative and multi-layered communications, War on Want has reinvigorated an old but unresolved issue, found new appropriate solutions and pushed it to the top of the media agenda.

## Some common pitfalls

- **Inconsistent positioning**

Communications methods/tactics are not consistent with the organisation's positioning (either historical or campaign specific) – for example campaigners are involved in confrontational direct action when the policy staff and Chief Executive is engaged in co-operative insider lobbying with the same targets. This is a dangerous line to tread which very few organisations manage well.

- **Messenger status**

Beware of 'unwritten protocol' concerning the status of the messengers you send. Targets are sometimes offended if they are lobbied by less senior staff. With a few exceptions, influential targets will expect to meet with senior management from VCOs and we have witnessed several occasions where targets' noses have unintentionally been put out of joint.

# Tip 9: Stay with the issue through to resolution

## Introduction

Securing meaningful change can take years. The history of campaigning is populated by stories of success achieved only after years and decades of commitment. Just to give a few examples, it took the Democratic Party 10 years to engage with civil rights following the Montgomery bus boycott; there has been campaigning on third world debt since the 1980s; and even where issues might look to the outside that they have appeared from nowhere, this is rarely the case: the Brent Spar episode, for example, came, “some decades into a long-running Greenpeace campaign against ocean dumping” (Rose, 2005).

Sometimes success can be quick, but experience suggests that this tends to be the exception rather than the rule. Movement tends to be slow and, when it comes, partial. Experience therefore suggests a need to:

- **Be realistic in planning**, about what kind of commitment campaigning on the issue is really likely to entail;
- **Be persistent and tenacious**;
- **Get the balance right** in your strategy and communications between generating a sense of urgency in the short term and keeping an eye on the long-term picture;
- **Consider possible exit strategies and plan ahead** – are you clear what your response will be if you secure the change you have been calling for? Have you thought through what the implications might be if you stop campaigning on the issue before it is won? Are there ways you can minimise any possible damage that could result, to your reputation, or to partners, for example?
- **Focus on results not promises** – even a change in policy makes no difference unless it is actually implemented in ways that deliver the benefit anticipated. Campaigns don’t end when legislation is passed. Monitoring the actual implementation of policy can be a form both of advocacy (to keep targets on track) and of evaluation (a way of assessing what difference your campaign made).

Obviously how the campaign develops and over what kind of period depends on nature of the particular campaign and issue. You should therefore keep an eye on the ‘campaign lifecycle’ and review progress regularly (see also Tip 3). If the campaign is not resonating, and there seems no prospect of future progress, it may not make sense to discontinue it, or at least reduce activity levels. But any such decision should be firmly based on an understanding of the external prospects, not driven by arbitrary internal decisions about how long to work on a particular issue before moving on.

*“Opposition to smoking used to be seen as eccentric, it’s taken 40 years or so for that to change”*

Wyn Grant in interview, Professor of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick

## Landmines

The landmines campaign is one that took many years to reach its goal. As with most campaigns, advances tended to come in dramatic shifts, rather than through continuous gradual progress. Although a formalised global campaign was not established until 1991-2 (with the formation of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines), initial attempts to restrict landmines first emerged in the 1970s, with concern and action developing throughout the 1980s. Over the following years, the campaign moved forward through the emergence of a broad based campaign (including grassroots organisations, ngos and UN agencies) and the building of partnerships with sympathetic states. Relations with this core group of states came to fruition in 1996 when the 'Ottawa Process' was initiated to fast-track a ban (bypassing established UN decision making channels). And in December 1997 over 120 countries came together to sign the Mine Ban Treaty. Even then, the convention to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of antipersonnel mines only came into place after being ratified by 40 countries, in March 1999.

Success of the landmines campaign can be traced to many factors, including the fact that the issue was a compelling one, presented with clear and consistent messages, and that there was a broad base of well-coordinated support for a ban. As well as all these things, the campaign combined the classic attributes of tenacity and good fortune to deliver a formidable result.

From Don Hubert, *The Landmine Ban: A Case Study in Humanitarian Advocacy*, Thomas J Watson Jr Institute for International Studies, Occasional Paper #42, 2000

## Following through to implementation

In the landmines case, cited above, significant campaigning still goes on to ensure that the ban is enacted and extended. Similarly, in the Good Campaigns Guide we cited the campaign to ban fox hunting as an example of a campaign with longevity, tracing its roots back decades. This campaign now represents a high-profile example of the need to stick with an issue: despite achieving policy change, continued vigilance and involvement has proved necessary to ensure that aspects of the Act are actually implemented.

## Secure actual change on the ground

Key in any issue is that there should be some way to ensure that any changes secured result in actual change on the ground. One way to do this is to take on a role of implementation. RNID's campaign to make digital hearing aids free through the NHS resulted in a government commitment to a first wave of funding for this provision. RNID itself took on implementation of these first wave sites, as it felt best placed to do, whilst concurrently campaigning for new money, with the result that government finally announced that every Trust in England and Wales would be covered by the scheme. Being involved in implementation helped build the credibility of RNID's campaigning messages as well as providing a new perspective on the issue, and this dual role of implementer and campaigner is one that RNID has repeated in subsequent campaigns (from Ellis, 2007).

Alternatively, a mechanism for assessment of progress can be built into the policy: Oxfam's 'Cut the Cost' campaign, for example, called on GlaxoSmithKline not only to develop a cost reduction strategy (for essential drugs used by poor communities), but also to provide annual reporting on its implementation (cited in Davies, 2001).

## Monitor and evaluate

Campaigning organisations can also take up the role of monitor themselves, using the information gathered as a basis for further campaigning. After protracted campaigning by the Coalition for a Healthy California, voters in that State approved the California Tobacco Tax and Health Promotion Act, increasing cigarette tax by 25 cents per pack and allocating this money to health care, education, research and the environment. The energy of the Coalition was now focused on implementation, including ensuring that evidence of any progress was captured. Evaluation of the legislation showed a number of positive effects, including a steeper decline in cigarette consumption in California than that occurring nationally (Salmon et al, 2003). This kind of evidence could then be used in bolstering campaigns for equivalent action in other parts of America.

## Some common pitfalls

- **Moving on prematurely**

We regularly see campaigns that have achieved significant progress but yet still nowhere near what was predicted in planning. For example, campaigns may be (commendably) beginning to influence debate on a particular issue, or visibly moving it up political agendas in the time that the organisation originally anticipated that policy change would be achieved. Sometimes, because of organisational planning processes or a desire to come up with new media-friendly messages, it is just at this point that the campaign draws to a close as the organisation plans to move on to a new issue. It is easy to forget that launching a campaign creates a responsibility to all kinds of groups to see it through in some way.

- **Lack of stamina**

The best campaigns often derive a sense of urgency from upcoming events, but if you focus too much on, and make too much of, short-term opportunity, then the energy can dissipate afterwards and momentum for your longer-term goals can be lost. This seems to have happened with the Make Poverty History and its focus on the G8 meeting in Edinburgh. Short-term campaigns of this type may also play into others' hands: we have witnessed targets becoming increasingly adept at riding out NGO storms, realising that they will be limited in duration

- **Limited vision**

Common too is the tendency to focus a lot of attention on a campaign launch, and often not think far beyond this, certainly not to the long-term implications of beginning the campaign. In fact, the exit strategy is as least as important as the launch.

- **Policy change is just the beginning**

Campaigners can easily lose sight of the fact that implementation is everything. Changing policy should be celebrated as success but not regarded as the end of the battle; in most cases it represents the start of a new one.

# Tip 10: Promote a campaigning culture

## Introduction

On the face of it, the idea of a “campaigning culture” is a somewhat vague concept; what it boils down to is the need (a) to be focused on achieving change and (b) to be organised and operate in ways that enhance campaigning effectiveness, rather than limiting it. All campaigns are different, but, generally speaking, the best campaigning organisations operate according to the following tenets:

- **Create a strategic space to operate in** – make sure you get the basic campaign design right by developing a clear sense of objectives and how to move towards them and then be prepared to operate opportunistically within this space;
- **Continually review progress and your response** – keep planning, reviewing and revising your campaign, ensuring that there is some kind of vehicle to allow these kinds of discussions to take place;
- **Maximise your capacity to react to events and manage a fast moving campaign** – change can be unpredictable and often turbulent, opportunities often open up expectedly and getting the timing right is vital;
- **Be willing to take risks** – it’s not usually possible to predict what will help your campaign take off: the more things you try in order to stimulate interest, the more likely you are to succeed; this requires an experimental philosophy: if something doesn’t work don’t view it as failure, look at it as a learning opportunity;
- **Get management structures right** – they should be flexible, supporting the need for quick decisions in conditions of uncertainty by delegating responsibility to the frontline; ensure too you have support from senior management and the Board;
- **Build a strong core team with effective leadership;**
- **Reflect your ideas in your behaviour** – hold on to what gives the sector its legitimacy and unique value;
- **Stay focused on the impact of your work** – remember that what matters is the difference your campaign makes to people’s lives, and make sure this guides your decision making.

The ideal combination of characteristics is to be steadfast in the long-term, attentive in the medium term and agile in the short-term.

*“The real action is in the enemy’s reaction”*

Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*

### Engage East Midlands

Engage East Midlands (EEM) is a Regional Infrastructure support body for the voluntary sector that boldly decided to put campaigning at the heart of its operations, even though doing so could threaten its own survival. In recent years, staff at EEM have become increasingly concerned about the Government’s growing emphasis on using the voluntary sector for service delivery and public sector improvement. Their concern was that increased demands on the sector could subsume its capacity to speak out for social change – the very *raison d’être* for so many frontline organisations in the East Midlands.



EEM Together with VOICE East Midlands and allies such as the Councils for Voluntary Services and churches started the Impact Project to try to assess how this problem affected the sector regionally and what support EEM could then provide. Intensive discussions with VCOs at all levels made EEM question the whole orientation of their existing support program. Krista Blair of EEM says “groups were used to dealing with government departments, local authorities etc. In the type of relationship where they were asked ‘how do you want to implement this programme?’ Or ‘what kind of funding do you need?’ The assumption always being that the relationship was based on project delivery. There was a kind of disconnect when they were suddenly asked by us, ‘but what do you want to change in society... what are you lacking to do this and how can we assist you?’

It became clear that all these front-line groups were concerned that they were not being heard on issues that they were concerned about. EEM responded by reviewing its own services and starting a process to reconfigure them from the traditional training and funding advice, to exploring ‘how do we get a coherent voice for the sector regionally?’

The decision to reorientate to a more campaigning focus has had major implications for EEM and how it supports the sector.

EEM and VOICE East Midlands decided to produce a voluntary sector manifesto for the region. In addition, they hit on the bold idea of establishing a Third Sector Parliament to democratise the ‘voice’ process. The model has three main components: the Third Sector Infrastructure Parliament or Assembly; the East Midlands Policy and Infrastructure Executive; and the Secretariat.

The Parliament is the body that brings together all local and regional third sector infrastructure bodies/networks and individuals from the sector who play a representative role on other bodies for example Local Development Agencies, Councils for Volunteer Services, Rural Community Councils, Learning and Skills Consortia. Ultimately this should ensure that the sector’s voice is coordinated and coherent on selected issues – hugely enhancing their legitimacy and weight with campaign targets. New regional policy forums have also been created as part of the Parliament process to investigate and address specific issues of concern in great depth and hopefully produce a coherent sectoral response.

The new administrative structure for this innovative project however, would mean the demise of EEM as a body. It is perhaps inspiring as an example of good practice that EEM has been willing to endure this if it leads to more powerful lobbying and increased campaign impact for the sector.

## Which? campaign on legal services reform

In a recent evaluation we conducted for Which?, we concluded that the organisation's campaigning achievements are considerable, particularly given the weight of vested interests ranged against some of their positions, which contrast strongly with the very modest resources that Which? has at its disposal.

One example of this is the campaigning Which? has conducted on legal services reform. Which? has been vocal on the issue since 2001 and has been diligent in intervening in the course of the debate during a sequence of policy development processes since then. Over this time, Which? has made some significant progress. The representative and regulatory arms have been split within the professional bodies, for example, a key plank in Which?'s campaigning. There has been progress on Which?'s call for the independent handling of complaints too.

The ways that Which? operates across its campaigning programme have been helpful in making progress on this and other issues, because:

- Targets and positions have remained constant over a significant period, as Which? is committed to seeing the issue through to resolution;
- Which? has promoted a consistent and challenging message in a way that has influenced the terms of debate: as a source in government noted, "key to [Which?'s] policy position is putting the consumer first – this was very challenging, as no one had considered the consumer as part of the debate on legal services before that – Which? have moved the debate from the producer interest and have had the strength to withstand producer resistance";
- Which? considers its moves carefully: closely following the debate, prioritising good political intelligence and shifting attention where necessary, able to operate as a constructive insider and strident critic as the situation requires;
- Planning processes are flexible and staff are trusted to deliver against objectives without undue interference;
- Across its campaigning programme, Which? develops priorities and allocates resources according to evidence of need, and is not diverted by considerations that are tangential to securing policy change.

Which?, it was said, has, "long championed the idea of independence in investigation, for years not being listened to by the representative bodies, but they have not given up". It is this combination of tenacity and focus - being firmly committed to securing change and pursuing the logic of that commitment over the long-term, ensuring objectives are well founded – that lies at the heart of Which?'s campaigning successes.

From an evaluation we conducted (with Ruth Mayne) of Which?'s campaigns and public affairs programme in early 2007; thanks to Which? for permission to draw from our report

## Some common pitfalls

- **Internal bureaucracy restrains campaigning**

Particularly in bigger organisations, internal campaign management can become hugely time consuming, making agile and flexible campaigning very difficult. Weak or bureaucratic management leads to slow decision-making and a reluctance to take risks, or to delegate responsibility to those with the best overview of the day-to-day campaign. In many larger organisations, as a result, the best campaigning often happens outside formal structures.

- **Being too internally focused**

Some campaigns operate according to a pre-determined template and plough along a pre-set path without taking changes in the external environment into account as they occur. Often this is because there is insufficient time for consideration built into the campaign. Sometimes this is a sign of the fact that action is valued over reflection, which may manifest itself more generally by an unwillingness to innovate and take risks.

- **Confusing campaigning with competitiveness**

Finally, it is important that campaigns have at their heart a desire to secure real change for beneficiaries. Linking marketing and campaign objectives can (at best) lead to greater synergy but there are risks (from the campaigning perspective), in particular that:

- The campaign can end up without clear priorities, an exercise in branding and/or supporter recruitment without an obvious campaigning purpose;
- The campaign loses direction and no longer pursues a clear path;
- Campaigning becomes directed towards easy/winnable issues that do not offer significant benefit (or even to non-issues that play well with public audiences) rather than keeping a focus on tackling real problems; and
- Working in partnership can be more difficult when there is a strong desire from those involved continually to promote their own 'brand'.

## For more information

### Select the issue that's right for you

Most campaign and advocacy planning guides (see for example Miller & Covey, 1997; Veneklasen & Miller 2002; de la Vega, 2001; Kingham & Coe, 2005) stress the need to spend time identifying problems and solutions before deciding on the issue and also the importance of considering issues of internal capacity within this. The various components that combine to make up internal capacity are further examined elsewhere (Grant 2000; Coxall 2001). Both Coxall & Grant consider the external context too, making the point that it helps if what you are calling for is in tune with wider cultural norms, and providing supporting evidence for this claim.

More specific points supported in the literature include the following: if there is an obvious problem and a good case that resolving it will bring benefit, progress will be easier (Interaction 2006; Shaw 2001). It helps to have a viable solution (Kelly, 2002; Court et al, 2006) and an outline of a course of action (Sutton, 1999). A constructive alternative is the price of success (Alinsky, 1989).

You should pick the target and fix responsibility (Alinsky, 1989; Cohen, 2001). The ideal target will be receptive (Mayoux; Sutton 1999), vulnerable to pressure in some way (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) and have the power actually to get things done (Lamb, 1997). It helps if there are some levels support within the target institution, even if not actually from the decision maker him or herself (Lamb, 1997). The target may have delay, rather than resolution, in mind (Coe, Luetchford & Kingham, 2002). The issue must stand out (Rose, 2005) and this is more likely if there is a short and easily understood chain of argument linking the problem to the solution you are advocating (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) and when there is an external rationale and sense of urgency (Mcguigan; Mayoux). External milestones can create urgency (Chawla & Singh, 2005) without which people won't act (Interaction, 2006). The examples cited of "unimaginable" successes are drawn from a historical review of transnational advocacy (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

### Compile strong and compelling evidence

One place to look is START (Simple Toolkit for Advocacy Research) from Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) [http://www.vso.org.uk/images/start\\_tcm8-4860.pdf](http://www.vso.org.uk/images/start_tcm8-4860.pdf)

There is widespread agreement that evidence is vital (e.g. Keck & Sikkink 1998; Kelly, 2002; Court, Osborne & Young, 2006), and that expertise and knowledge provides a key source of legitimacy (Davies, 2001; Chapman & Fisher, 1999; Lattimer), and thus a source of influence (Court & Young, 2003). In fact, campaigns based on assumptions may not benefit those intended (Mayoux). Elements of research cited as important include the need for it to be timely and relevant (de Toma & Gosling, 2005) and practical (Stone, 2001). It is important too that target audiences perceive it as coming from a credible source (Sida 2005). Hence the need to be truthful and not exaggerate the issue (Wilson, 1993). Whilst compelling evidence is important, its evidence can sometimes be limited by democratic processes: evidence of the benefits of having police on the beat, for example, is somewhat immaterial because this is in any case what people want (Mulgan 2003). Sometimes therefore the balance of political forces counts more (Coe, Luetchford & Kingham, 2002).

### Understand targets and audiences and track what's going on

The BBC's actionnetwork [www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork/) provides advice to help you understand audiences (see sections on how to lobby political representatives, how councils and councillors can help you, etc.) Some books on campaigning (Lattimer, 2000; Ghose, 2005) have chapters on various institutions and how they operate (such as parliament, Whitehall, the EU and local government). The legislative process is also explained by genial host Billy the Bill at <http://www.paultyler.libdems.org/content/view/194/38/>. But given that every campaign and every

context is different, and constantly changing, we suggest that such sources should be used to supplement your own research, not replace it. Tools and processes to help you understand the political dynamic in any particular situation are available in various advocacy guides (such as Veneklasen & Miller 2002; Kingham & Coe, 2005). Many advocacy planning guides are available on the internet; for just three examples look at:

- Save The Children's Advocacy Toolkit currently available at [www.mande.co.uk/docs/advocacyinitiativestoolkit2005.pdf](http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/advocacyinitiativestoolkit2005.pdf) or
- Amnesty International Campaigning Manual: <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/campaigning-manual-eng>
- CPRE's guide for local campaigning groups at <http://www.cpre.org.uk/library/results/campaigning>

More specific points supported in the literature include the following: effective campaigns understand institutions' inner workings and the political realities within which they operate (Chawla & Singh, 2005; Interaction 2006) hence the importance of analysing the forces (Rose, 06), including formal and systems, power relations, stakeholders, positions adopted, and possible entry points (Cohen, 2001). As part of this it is important to understand how policy makers think, when are decisive moments to intervene given the political and specific policy context (Court, Osborne & Young 2006), considering both individuals and institutions (Keck & Sikkink 1998). Often NGOs' understanding and intelligence is not as good as their opponents' (Hilder, 2007). You need to be clear about who are the public audiences to target (Court, Osborne & Young, 2006; Coffman 2002; Interaction, 2006); and the public target is never 'public opinion' (Finney & Peach, 2004; Kingham & Coe 2005); it is important to segment and target more specific audiences (Figueroa et al 2002; Rice & Atkin, 2001; Wolf, 2001; Lewis, 2007). Judgements on who the audiences are and what they think should not be based on assumptions; understand audiences through research (Elton Consulting, 2002) and pre-test messages (Wolf, 2001; Gladwell, 2000). The capacity to monitor progress is important (de Toma & Gosling, 2005): there is a need for constant assessment of progress (Chawla & Singh, 2005) so that you can base campaign decisions on 'real time intelligence' (HFRP, Spring 2007); and this should be gathered systematically (Kingham & Coe, 2005). For this you need constant vigilance (Ellis, 2007) and a supply of real-time intelligence (HFRP Evaluation Exchange, spring 2007).

### **Be clear what you are trying to achieve**

Again, planning guides mentioned above can help you through this process. See also: [www.advocacy.org/planning/](http://www.advocacy.org/planning/)

<http://fp.continuousprogress.org/node/22>  
[www.spitfirestrategies.com](http://www.spitfirestrategies.com)

More specific points supported in the literature include the following: Clear goals can help any campaign (Wolf, 2001; Finney & Peach, 2004; Ghose, 2005; Ellis, 2007) and this entails a clear identification of your target and what you want them to do by when (Alinsky, 1989; Interaction, 2006). In doing so, you need to prioritise and focus in order to define objectives that are realistically achievable (Ellis, 2007; Davies, 2001; Wilson, 1993; de la Vega, 2001). Your objectives should be based on a sound sense of how you anticipate change will happen (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Ellis 2007; Coe, Fricke & Kingham, 2004; Rice & Atkin, 2001; Kelly, 2002; Communications Consortium Media Center, 2004; Davies, 2001; Coffman, 2002, Mcguigan). As Wyn Grant puts it, "the adoption of unsophisticated strategies may be a reflection of ineffectiveness rather than its cause" (Grant, 2000). A combination of narrow policy objectives and more transformational goals can work best (Miller & Covey 1997; Kelly, 2002, Interaction, 2006; de la Vega, 2001) and it makes sense to recognise the multi-faceted nature of change (Kelly, 2002, HFRP Evaluation Exchange, spring 2007; Chapman & Wameyo, 2001). Campaigns benefit from a clear influencing strategy being in place from the start (Court & Young, 2003) but this should create space for flexibility, with objectives reviewed and adapted as the campaign evolves (Davies, 2001; Shaw, 2001; Interaction, 2006).

The Five A Day case study is outlined in Dorfman, Ervice & Woodruff, 2002.

## Use a range of tactics according to the situation

Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* is a good place to start, especially the 13 rules themselves, as is Chris Rose's *How to Win Campaigns*. Wyn Grant's book, *Pressure Groups and British Politics*, presents the insider-outsider typology and discusses issues arising from this.

More specific points supported in the literature include the following: the best approach tends to involve combining insider and outsider strategies - or at least carry with you the prospect of adopting a more confrontational approach, if you are not happy with progress being made on the issue (Chawla & Singh, 2005; Kingham & Coe, 2005; Davies, 2001). Keep the pressure on (Alinsky, 1989) through deploying different techniques, working with others if necessary to ensure you have a range and variety of tactics (Rose, 2005; Kelly, 2002, de Toma & Gosling, 2005), targeting different audiences at different levels, recognising that there are multiple conduits of influence (Stone, 2001) and switching targets to exert additional leverage (Chapman & Fisher, 1999), especially if you are not making progress through the identified route (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The key point is that tactics follow strategy (Wolf, 2001; Interaction, 2006; Kingham & Coe, 2005; Shaw, 2001) and should be based on an understanding of when best to use different campaign methods and positioning with different audiences (Lamb, 1997). One-off protests and media moments can be important but as a component of, not a substitute for, a coherent and proactive programme of influence (Shaw, 2001; Hilder, 2007).

## Involve beneficiaries

Issues around participation are explored in *One World Trust's Global Accountability Project*. The point is made elsewhere (Jordan, 2005) that, without explicit consideration, the default tends to be to focus on being accountable to donors rather than beneficiaries.

Other specific points supported in the literature include the following: beneficiary involvement represents a source of legitimacy, strengthening the moral case for your issue (Lattimer, 2000, Chapman & Fisher, 1999). Beneficiaries' testimony in itself represents a form of 'expertise' (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). It is important that you clearly explain and demonstrate who you represent in order to give yourself a clear platform (Sida, 2005). Beneficiaries' involvement can help ensure policy change results in actual implementation (Chapman & Fisher). The process of information gathering itself is important, as potentially collaborative or disempowering (Kelly, 2002; Jordan & Tuijl, 1998).

## Find and work with useful allies

Shimmin & Coles' book on *Campaigning in Collaboration* explores the issue by looking at a range of very different joint working initiatives. Jordan and van Tuijl's paper on *Political Responsibility in Transnational NGO Advocacy* presents a useful model for thinking about the degree of mutual accountability existing between organisations who are working together on an issue. There is some guidance on joint working too provided by the advocacy institute at [www.advocacy.org/coalitions/](http://www.advocacy.org/coalitions/)

Specific points supported in the literature include the following: Joint working is the strategic key to success (Shaw, 2001). Benefits are sometimes presumed rather than articulated but include that alliances and networks are a source of legitimacy (Chapman & Fisher, 1999) and political clout (Court et al, 2006), allowing for division of labour (Davies, 2001), in a context where few organisations are big or skilled enough to work on their own (Kelly, 2002). Broad or unexpected coalitions can be particularly effective (Coe, Fricke & Kingham, 2004; Ellis, 2004; Shaw, 2001; Shimmin & Coles, 2007). Joint working requires a common understanding around purpose and parameters (Kingham & Coe, 2005) and good governance structures (Court et al, 2006; Chapman & Fisher, 1999). There can be tensions between decisive leadership and consensus decision-making, but a 'structured campaign' can help to build strong and sustainable relationships (Court et al, 2006). Collaboration is an evolutionary process (Shimmin & Coles, 2007). If the coalition is going in

same direction, then agreement on the detail is not vital (Shimmin & Coles, 2007). Trust is key (Ellis, 2004; Gajda, 2004; Shimmin & Coles, 2007): where there is trust, transparency and common purpose and common ground, differences can be managed (Chawla & Singh, 2005). However, the price of preventing splits can be a high one (Grant, 2000), with lengthy approval processes spelling doom (Shaw, 2001).

### **Communicate well and persistently**

Fenton Communication's guide, *Now Hear This*, represents an excellent introduction to and summary of this area. Chris Rose also has many insights on the subject in his book and at [www.campaignstrategy.org](http://www.campaignstrategy.org)

Specific points supported in the literature include the following: Make the strongest case you can without inspiring doubts about your judgement (Wilson, 1984): messages must be understandable and credible (Coffman, 2002). Look at the issue from the target audiences' point of view (66) and absorb and reflect audiences' perspectives (Rice & Atkin, 2001). Start from where your audience is (Rose, 2006) and think through and counter opponents' arguments (Ellis, 2007; Coe, Fricke & Kingham, 2004). The bigger the audience, the simpler the message should be (Kingham & Coe, 2005; Wilson, 1993; Sida, 2005). The issue must be visually and verbally communicable (Rose, 2005); stories provide a tremendous source of power (Cohen, 2001). Highlight stories, symbols and actions (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Don't campaign on the issue, campaign to change the issue (Rose, 2005). Be persistent, keep talking (Ellis, 2007; Interaction, 2006); the idea is to provoke a conversation (Rose, 2005). Messages should be clear simple and concise (Wolf, 2001), making the case that action is needed now (Interaction, 2006) and using external milestones to create a sense of urgency (Chawla & Singh, 2005; Collins et al, 2001). Statements should be concise, persuasive and action oriented (Sida, 2005), requiring no further explanation (Rose, 2006). Check that you can convey your message in 20 seconds (Ellis, 2007). You should present a broad common vision that captures the imagination (Chawla & Singh, 2005): part of Jubilee 2000's success came about because the issue was framed in moral terms (Collins et al, 2001). But you should ensure you make a business, not just a moral, case (Ellis, 2007): moral arguments may have little resonance with some audiences (Coe, Fricke & Kingham, 2004). Information should be tailored to different audiences (Stone, 2001). The messenger too can be important (Coe, Fricke & Kingham, 2004); variables to consider include their credibility with and attractiveness to different audiences and their power (Rice & Atkin, 2001). Reframing the issue (see case study) may involve a shift in thinking for advocates as well as target audiences (Chawla & Singh, 2005). The way you talk about the issue should imply an obvious solution (Salmon et al, 2003)

### **Stay with the issue through to resolution**

Chapter 6 of Jonathan Ellis' *Campaigning for Success* explores this issue from the perspective of a number of different campaigns.

Specific points supported in the literature include the following: Securing meaningful change can take years (Chapman & Fisher, 1999). The reaction to the civil rights issue by the Democratic Party is cited in Shaw, 2001. Be tenacious (Wilson, 1984; Wilson, 1993; Court et al, 2006; Ellis, 2007). Consider possible exit strategies and plan ahead (Rose, 2005, Ellis, 2007). Focus on results not promises (Shaw, 2001). Even a change in policy makes no difference unless it is actually implemented in ways that deliver the benefit anticipated (Court et al, 2006; Mcguigan; Grant, 2000; Kingham & Coe, 2005). Monitoring the actual implementation of policy can be a form both of advocacy and of evaluation (Mcguigan).

## Promote a campaigning culture

Some of these issues are explored further in Chapter 9 of the *Good Campaigns Guide*. David Cohen's Reflections on *Advocacy in Advocacy for Social Justice* also provide food for thought.


Specific points supported in the literature include the following: Develop a clear sense of your objectives and how to move towards them (Chawla & Singh, 2005) and then be prepared to operate opportunistically within this space (Wolf, 2001). Continually review progress (Wolf, 2001), ensuring that there is some kind of vehicle to allow these kinds of discussions to take place (Shaw, 2001). Maximise your reactive capacity (de Toma & Gosling, 2005); change can be unpredictable and often turbulent (Stone, 2001; Kingham & Coe, 2005; Chawla & Singh, 2006); opportunities often open up unexpectedly (Sutton, 1999) and getting the timing right is vital (Ellis, 2007, Salmon et al, 2003). Hence the need for rapid responsiveness (Coe, Fricke & Kingham, 2004). Try and stay one step ahead (Lattimer, 2000). Adopt an experimental philosophy (Cohen, 2001). Set up flexible management structures (Cohen, 2001) supporting the need for quick decisions in conditions of uncertainty (Mulgan, 2003) by delegating responsibility to the frontline (Lamb, 1997; Coe, Fricke & Kingham, 2004). Ensure too you have support from senior management and the Board (Lamb, 1997; Ellis, 2007). Build a strong core team (Chapman & Fisher, 1999) with effective leadership (Cohen, 2001; Chawla & Singh, 2005), especially important in times of political change (Coxall, 2001). Individual champions can play a crucial role (Chapman & Fisher, 1999), especially those who are especially well-connected, have access to useful information and/or are persuasive advocates (Gladwell, 2001). Reflect your ideas in your behaviour, holding on to what gives the sector its legitimacy and unique value (Cohen, 2001; Wilson, 1984). Stay focused on the impact of your work (Kingham & Coe, 2005).

There are many generic sources of advice, these include amongst others:

- [www.campaignstrategy.org](http://www.campaignstrategy.org)
- [www.seedsforchange.org.uk](http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk)
- [www.thechangeagency.org](http://www.thechangeagency.org)
- [www.campaigncreator.org](http://www.campaigncreator.org)
- [www.spitfirestrategies.com](http://www.spitfirestrategies.com)



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