

Working with local communities to fight cuts and privatisation

A practical guide

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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this advice on building community alliances and using community organising to fight the public service cuts.

The cuts and reforms will have a devastating effect on communities. Cutting public spending means job losses and redundancies in the public and private sectors. It will hurt families and neighbourhoods and all those who rely on public services, as well as having a knock-on effect on the local and national economy. To challenge the coalition's agenda at a local level, UNISON needs to work with as wide a range of friends and allies as we can.

The attack on public services gives us a chance to develop new, creative tactics to bring pressure to bear on decision makers at all levels. By building links with a wide range of community allies, we can counteract the divisions that keep people from acting together. Community organising is about building relationships with people in our communities to strengthen our ability to bring about change. Community campaigning will let us share our members' interests with others, so they become issues that are important to the wider community.

This guidance recognises the great work happening in branches and regions and aims to inspire others to engage in this area. It is hoped that this guide will introduce the ideas of community organising, building alliances and community engagement to you as well as give you helpful tips and practical ways that you can build these elements into your UNISON campaigns. This guide is primarily designed for organisers to assist them in their work with branches on working with the community. It must be remembered that there is no silver bullet to working with community groups and working in alliances is not a new idea, either within UNISON or outside, and there are already pockets of good practice throughout the union, some of which are highlighted in this guidance.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dave Prentis." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dave Prentis

General secretary

Introduction

Why build community alliances?

The Tory-led government has made no secret of its aim to use the economic crisis to make an historic shift in shrinking the size of the state. The cuts and reforms will have a devastating effect on communities. Cutting public spending means job losses and redundancies in the public and private sectors. It will hurt families and neighbourhoods and all those who rely on public services, as well as having a knock-on effect on the local and national economy. To challenge the coalition government's agenda at a local level, UNISON needs to work with as wide a range of friends and allies as we can.

As part of our organising strategy we have an opportunity to establish coalitions and campaigns against the cuts and reforms. There are many different ways that branches can work in partnership with community organisations and groups. Sometimes partnership working may involve using or revitalising structures and partnerships that already exist, for example, local trades councils and civic groups such as London Citizens; in other cases it may mean the establishment of new structures and partnerships. In some cases a single-issue campaign is established and in others a broader multi-dimensional issue. All these different ways of working will have pros and cons that organisers will need to consider with their branches.

When looking at ways to work with the community, organisers should get branches to consider their resources and organisation before undertaking any of the steps outlined in this guidance.

Making campaigns appeal to the community

As part of our campaigning and organising work we need to win over the public and engage with them around the cuts and reform agenda. A key element of this work will be the way that we frame our campaigns so that they resonate not just with activists or trade unionists but also the general public. With regards to the public sector cuts and reforms, advocating an alternative 'better way' will be essential. UNISON needs to counter the argument that the cuts and reforms are essential, and portray our alternative version as something more than the protection of our vested interests.

Using this guide

This guide takes you through 11 Steps to building alliances and organising in the community. It provides some tools for organisers to use with branches or that branches can use on their own for carrying out some of the assessments you will need to make before campaigning.

How much or how little is done will depend on the nature of the branch and the circumstances of the campaign. Even if only one or two steps are carried out it will help to build a branch's links in the community and strengthen their ability to campaign.

Case studies throughout the text give a real context to the work described, while the resources section on page 23 has in-depth descriptions of assessments and includes the forms you will need to do them.

You may also wish to refer to *Effective Campaigning – a UNISON Guide*, a colourful and practical guide to running all kinds of campaigns. It is available free to branches from UNISON's online catalogue (stock number 2916) or download it from: www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/19308.pdf.

There are many useful tools, factsheets and "How to" guides in UNISON's Online campaigning area at: unison.org.uk/resources/How_to.asp

11 Steps to organising in the community

STEP 1

Step 1: Work with other local UNISON branches

UNISON members across all service groups are also local residents and will be affected by local cuts and public service reforms. Bringing together branches in different service groups to tackle local issues will make us stronger. Branches can inform and support each other, and make the best use of contacts between UNISON and other organisations (see *Case study: The Real Oxford Union*, page 7).

Because this type of working is new to most of UNISON, a lead from the region is crucial to making it work. Some groups of branches have good community contacts and may only need some initial regional co-ordination, and perhaps a regional pool bid or a little support from area or local organisers to help them get started. In other cases, community organising will be completely new and full-time support from area or local organisers may be needed to help build a community alliance. Regions also have an important role to play in smoothing potential tensions between branches and in clarifying what are genuinely cross-branch issues.

Case study: The Real Oxford Union

Branches across health, local government, higher education and police staff have come together to form The Real Oxford Union. Oxford branches are aware that their local economy is as much at risk as the north of England, with over 42% of jobs dependent on the public purse.

Over the next 18 months The Real Oxford Union will encourage closer working between the activists, branches and regional staff. The overall aims of the project are to increase:

- the number of trained and active stewards
- overall membership numbers
- membership density in all key workplaces
- UNISON's public, political and news media profile
- co-operative working between branches in supporting members, including joint meetings of branch executives.

Working with UNISON's Hidden Workforce project, the branches have begun to map contracted-out workers who could be organised and trained using new media. The group plans to hold a meeting with key community organisations in Oxford to build its campaign.

STEP 2

Step 2: Broaden the coalition – working with trades councils, regional TUCs and public service users

Groups of UNISON branches may want to join forces with other unions in their area through a trades council or regional TUC, as well as building links with community and professional organisations and service users who share our concerns (see *Case study: Northern Public Service Alliance*, page 9 and *Case Study: Basingstoke council community warden service*, p10).

Sit down with your campaign group to map out the organisations you want to contact. Which groups would be particularly interested in a specific issue you are dealing with? Which ones would have the power to influence decision-makers? (see *Carrying out a power analysis*, p 22).

In all cases we have to build partnerships with community organisations not as add-ons but as central to the wider campaign.

Types of groups that branches might work with:

- parent teacher associations
- resident associations
- trade union councils
- other UNISON branches
- other trade union branches
- religious groups
- youth groups
- local voluntary organizations
- local political groups such as Labour
- service user groups
- students' unions
- civic groups such as London Citizens
- sport clubs
- professional groups
- anti-cuts and reforms groups.

Case study: Northern Public Service Alliance

In the north of England local Public Service Alliance coalitions have been launched in North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Sunderland, Durham, Teesside, Newcastle, Gateshead and Northumberland.

Made up of 15 unions working with the Northern TUC, the Northern PSA is committed to engage with public service workers, service users, community and voluntary sector organisations to build a massive campaign against the government's austerity measures, which will impact on the most vulnerable in society. The coalition government's policies for public spending, welfare benefits and education have major implications for families and communities. The Northern PSA aims to bring together trade unions, community groups, voluntary and faith groups and others dependent on public services to discuss how to respond to these threats, to protect our communities, and defend public services.

Anti-cuts and reforms groups

There are a number of anti-cuts and reforms groups starting up around the country and it is good for branches to work with them. Branches will find the *Democracy in UNISON guidelines* (<http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/13305.pdf>) useful. Where an anti-cuts group is local, for example initiated by a trades council, support can be given as long as it meets the following criteria:

- It is run on an accountable and transparent basis (ie it must have a constitution, elected officers and formal minutes of meetings kept and available for inspection).
- It acts consistently with UNISON aims and objectives including independence of any political party – the group must not be a front for any political party and none of the group's resources must be used to support any political party either directly or indirectly.

If the group meets the above then UNISON branch resources can be committed to it, as outlined in the Democracy in UNISON guidelines, as long as:

- Any decision to commit UNISON branch resources is made by the branch committee and minuted.
- The UNISON branch has satisfied itself that the group meets the criteria above.

If you are in doubt about the groups that you want to work with please ask your regional organiser.

Case study: Basingstoke council community warden service

A decision by Basingstoke council to scrap its entire community warden service was the trigger for a highly successful joint UNISON/community campaign to save the service. The council's plan was to replace wardens who worked in nine estates with five PCSOs through Hampshire police.

The UNISON branch set out to build community support for a campaign to keep the community wardens. The campaign was built around a clear strategy highlighting the valuable role wardens played in their local communities. Basingstoke is a new town with many high-rise estates and high rates of youth crime.

The role of the community wardens was to engage youth and public and reduce the fear of crime locally by engaging with local residents, rather than using the law.

The campaign harnessed the wardens' own links to build the support of the local estate groups. This included parish councils, Neighbourhood Watch, church groups, Labour councillors, youth club volunteer leaders and sports coaches.

UNISON led meetings with these community groups to start a campaign with the slogan "Back 'em don't sack 'em". They ran a successful press campaign, with residents speaking up in the letters page of the paper and speaking out against the elimination of the service.

While the first council lobby was only moderately successful, the decision by councillors to delay the decision while the Council Scrutiny Committee investigated the strength of feeling against the 22 redundancies, gave the branch valuable time to increase support.

With support from Labour councillors, the group built steadily towards a large lobby at an important full council meeting. On the day, the courtyard outside the council office was packed with all types of supporters, including six women vicars who spoke at the full council meeting in support of keeping the wardens.

The whole campaign took six months and resulted in the rescue of the popular warden service – still in place three years later. The stewards recruited at the time are still active and membership amongst the wardens remains 100%.

The campaign taught the branch that power could be gained by having the public working with them. They learned that working in coalition gave the campaign a high profile and helped them to hold politicians, who feared that they would not be elected in these wards at the next election, to account.

STEP 3

Step 3: Talking to members and developing a listening campaign

One of the greatest resources UNISON has is the people that make up branches – even those that don't think of themselves as activists. Many members will be affected by the reforms and cuts in ways that make them more willing to get involved in a campaign. They may also have connections to community organisations that could be potential allies. But we won't know any of this unless we ask them.

Branches can be encouraged to use a 'listening campaign' to find out more about the lives of people in the workplace and how the government's agenda is impacting on their lives.

Benefits of a listening campaign

A listening campaign will:

- give branches an idea of where they could build links around common concerns

- build relationships between people as well as links between union and local community members
- help branches to strengthen the organisation and to form relationships with their members.

What is a listening campaign?

A listening campaign is a structured conversation with a small group of people, asking a couple of simple questions and listening to what people have to say. This would ideally be carried out on a one-to-one basis.

Questions to ask might include:

- What impact will pay freezes and job losses have on your income and ability to make ends meet?
- What will you have to give up?
- What are the implications for your family, health, children's education, and community participation?
- What will the loss of specific services mean to you?
- What about cuts in benefits?
- Where do you spend your money now and how will this change?

Organisers will need to think about practical ways that they can assist branches in getting this organised within the branches – for example, holding small group meetings with stewards, who can then do the same with their members.

Encourage members to speak to contacts who share their experiences of the cuts, such as staff at their children's school, their GP practice or their local housing association. Use the process to recruit new members who might be fellow parents, patients or tenants.

If there are pressing issues facing the branch use the listening campaign as a way to identify which community organisations members belong to and how the branch can make contact with these organisations. This is an opportunity to build relationships with community organisations that share common concerns with UNISON members. For example, faith organisations will care about the welfare of people in their congregation in particular. The point is to find a common interest.

Tools: One-to-ones

One-to-ones are the mainstay of community organising. They establish a relationship that can yield benefits in the long term. The main goal of a one-to-one meeting is to get to know someone, not to sell them UNISON's position. A potential outcome of a one-to-one meeting is that it could encourage a non-member to join the union.

Within community organising one-to-ones will operate at different levels with different people, for example:

- members
- activists
- non-members
- the general public
- the local community
- leaders of other organisations.

A one-to-one meeting is an alternative to all the other short-cuts that we often try to take – newsletters, fliers, videos, email, committee meetings, bulletin announcements, slogans banners or logos, telephone calls and so on – to connect with other people. You can make contact using these other methods, but you cannot build relationships with people without investing the time and effort to speak to them face-to-face.

A one-to-one is a personal conversation with a contact to learn about his/her concerns, level of interest and commitment to an issue, and the resources he or she has to offer. One-to-ones should take place in a quiet setting and last 30 minutes to an hour, during which time the people involved should develop a level of trust with one another. The person you are meeting should do most of the talking, while you ask questions to clarify points and learn more detail.

A one-to-one is an active exchange. You are not just gathering information, data or statistics to put into a report. The one-to-one is the basis for developing a relationship between you and your contact. And don't be afraid to share some of your own story too. That's part of building a public relationship.

Finally it is very important to document your one-to-ones, but do not do this during the meeting. Your notes will enable you to identify potential leaders and create mailing and phone lists, so you can contact people in the future.

For a more detailed guide to carrying out one-to-one meetings see *Resources*, p 23.

STEP 4

Step 4: Mapping members' affiliations

UNISON members may be active in many organisations. They may be members of voluntary organisations, religious organisations or residents' associations; be school governors or councillors; play or coach sport; have children at local schools or play an active part in other community groups. By mapping members' affiliations it is possible to see what links with the local community already exist and how they can be utilised.

How to map members' affiliations

- Try to identify the areas where large numbers of the workers live.
- Find out which organisations they belong to outside of UNISON (faith organisations, community groups, charities, pressure groups, sport clubs etc).
- Find out how members' national or ethnic communities are organised.
- Research what media or communication outlets (newspapers, radio stations) have influence in the community.

By mapping these elements we are able to build connections to other community organisations and see what organisations UNISON already has informal links with.

You can record the information you collect using the forms in *Resources*, p 23.

STEP 5

Step 5: Using members' affiliations

Once a mapping exercise around member affiliations has been carried out it gives organisers and branches an opportunity to use these informal links. For example, instead of cold calling a list of community organisations asking for their support, members can be encouraged to use their links to those organisations to make direct contact and to introduce branches to local groups and community organisations. When carrying this out, members will have to be briefed about messages and what is wanted from them in using their links.

STEP 6

Step 6: Contacting community organisations

Try to contact community organisations using one-to-one meetings, not emails, letters or leaflets. Try to find out how their organisation will be affected by cuts or freezes. It is important not just to sell them UNISON's agenda but also to find out about their issues and concerns and then to try and find some common ground. The point is to build relationships that will be sustainable in the long term, not just sign people up to a UNISON campaign.

STEP

7

Step 7: Bringing together a campaign working group

Once mapping and one-to-ones have been carried out it would be ideal to bring together a working group or coalition to review the one-to-ones and to invite key people to join a community action team (or committee, task force, campaign group). Ideally, teams should have up to 10 to 20 active members so that they are big enough to have representation from the wide range of groups. Try to build an action team of core leaders who have time, energy and passion for the issue, possess a can-do attitude and represent a diverse cross-section from many sectors of the community (see *Case study: Dudley Coalition Against the Cuts*, below).

Once the team has been built:

- identify the most significant problems that people are facing
- identify one small, achievable change that would make a real difference
- plan a campaign to tackle that issue
- carry out a power analysis to develop your strategy (see *Tools: Power analysis* p17).

More details on how to plan your campaign can be found in *Effective Campaigning – a UNISON guide* at <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/19308.pdf>

Case study: Dudley Coalition Against the Cuts

A UNISON officer and Managers in Partnership national officer, is also a local Labour Party councillor and lead member for finance at Tory controlled Dudley Council. Through the trades council in Dudley he talked to various community groups about the issues facing the community and it was decided to call a meeting. In addition to the trade union movement attending, the group received great support from local voluntary groups and local faith groups. Around 60 people attended from over 20 groups or societies.

Following this a steering group of 20 people was established and activity has been co-ordinated around defending a local youth group, including a potential rally and demonstration at a meeting to set Council Tax. For the UNISON organising staff involved it is hugely encouraging to see many groups uniting to defend their communities. The group includes many young people who up until now had little knowledge or insight into the important role trade unions can play in co-ordinating campaigns and encourage activity.

Below is a good example of how North Lanarkshire is setting up a coalition, bringing together people from all sections of the local community

Case study: North Lanarkshire Economic and Social Justice Forum

Lanarkshire Economic and Social Justice Forum is a local coalition being established in North Lanarkshire. Spearheaded by UNISON, the STUC and elements in the Catholic church, the group aims to build a citizens group that can tackle local issues around poverty and social justice.

The group has held a forum to bring faith groups, trade unions and civil society organisations together to discuss the issues of social injustice within Lanarkshire. They are asking: “What would a socially just Lanarkshire look like, and how can we bring about the change that will make that socially just Lanarkshire a reality?” The forum will look at the next steps for building a socially just Lanarkshire. Organisers say: “We intend to ask individuals to write about their experiences, ideas and hopes for the forum. We shall then use these testimonies to produce a pamphlet which will be distributed to those attending the forum and to our wider community.”

Tools: Power analysis

For any given solution to a problem, we must analyse who has the power to give us what we are seeking. To make the most of our capacity, experience and size we need to be able to analyse our own power in relation to our ability to achieve a given goal. Questions that need to be asked include:

Do we have the power to stop the closures/ cuts/ reforms or do we only have this power when we work with other key community groups?

Do those who are making the decisions feel that we have the power to change things?

We need to be very clear about identifying a campaign “target” – the person or people with the power to give us what we are seeking. When the target is someone who we find difficult to influence directly, further analysis can help identify “secondary targets” who we can influence and who also have influence over the primary target.

We also need to make the most of our resources and take the time to conduct an honest assessment of our power in relation to our desired goals. It is best to choose a campaign that is achievable, even if it does not solve all of the problems that the union is facing. Small wins build confidence and the skills of those involved. It is also wise to choose objectives that build our membership and means that we become more powerful through the campaign.

There are forms to help you carry out a power analysis, see *Resources*, p23.

STEP 8

Step 8: Organise a community meeting

Once the groundwork has been done for the campaign it is time to call a face-to-face meeting with fellow activists. Having a meeting isn't the goal of the meeting, but a step toward creating a plan of action to make the campaign a success.

Here is a checklist of things to consider:

- ✓ Be strategic about who is invited.
- ✓ Keep first meetings to a manageable number so that decisions and actions can be made.
- ✓ Invite people personally to the meeting, telling them why it is important that they be part of this campaign. For example, "It is really important that we have the parent voice as part of our campaign; we would love to have your perspective on our work".
- ✓ Set a timed agenda. Pass out a written agenda or write one large enough for all meeting attendees to see, so that everyone is aware of the direction of the meeting.
- ✓ Decide who is the meeting convener and brief them on aspects such as thanking everyone for coming, introducing themselves and giving a brief background on why they are interested in this issue, then have the others do the same.
- ✓ Ask the group to select the issue(s) they want to discuss, and then get the team members to prioritise the problem(s)/issue(s) to work on.
- ✓ Don't overwhelm people, but share knowledge with them. It is also helpful to pass out materials/brochures that you found useful.

STEP 9

Step 9: Take creative action

The point of action is to initiate change, so always be clear about what it is you want to accomplish.

We will not get what we want without building public pressure on decision-makers. That will involve taking well-planned, careful and creative action.

Too often we take action just to be seen to be doing something, without having a clear idea of what we are aiming for.

Well planned actions should have three elements. They should:

- convey a simple, dramatic message that asks people to choose sides
- be personalised – actions should target the person with the power to deliver the result we want
- be within our experience and outside of the targets' experience

The action should be fun, innovative and creative – something that will grab the attention of the media and the public. Make use activities your group comfortable with to make the targets uncomfortable. For example, at a Living Wage protest at the Tate Modern in December 2007, campaigners used their experience of singing in church choirs to hold a carol concert outside the Tate and a highly visual action inside (see *Case study: South London Citizens*, p21) . They were comfortable with singing – but the management of the Tate was not accustomed to being sung to!

See *Effective Campaigning – a UNISON guide*

Download from: <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/19308.pdf>

Case study: South London Citizens

When members of South London Citizens discovered that cleaning and catering workers at Tate Modern were not being paid the London living wage, they initiated a campaign to get the museum to change its policy. Frustrated by the failure of repeated attempts to meet with Tate management, the action team decided to hold a high-profile, symbolic event that would get the public's interest.

A week before Christmas in 2007, church choirs joined London Citizens groups in a carol concert outside the Tate. Meanwhile, around 200 activists milled about in the Turbine Hall. At a signal, they lined up along the 167-metre crack in the floor that was Doris Salcedo's *Shibboleth* 2007, an installation meant to stand for the world's long legacy of racism and colonialism. Joining hands over the crack, the demonstrators highlighted the Tate's hypocrisy in addressing social divisions through art while perpetuating them through the pay of its own workers. The following day Tate management offered London Citizens a meeting and a promise to review their pay rates.

STEP

10

Step 10: Identify and develop leaders, gain skills and build community relationships

In community organising, leadership development is a central concern and a key outcome in addition to policy change objectives. As members participate in social change work, build skills, and take on responsibilities, they become leaders within the organising group. Developing these leaders and building the base of leaders and other community members is an ongoing focus of community organising. These leaders are then able to reach out into the different areas of the community and start to bring about change.

STEP 11

Step 11: Train members

Training is key to building alliances and community organising. While a written guide like this one will help to introduce these techniques, they become much more alive in training. Key community organising training is an opportunity to develop and test out one-to-ones and ways of approaching community groups. To find out more about accessing training in community organising techniques, please contact your regional organiser.

Resources

Mapping community allies

Ask your members how they are being affected by cuts and reorganisations. Ask what organisations they are affiliated to and what action they think they would be prepared to take. Use this form to record answers.

Name
Contact details
Affiliations
Impact of cuts
Action they could take

Carrying out a power analysis

Doing a power analysis is about getting specifics – naming names, doing your homework to find out about your own members and activists and the organisations, employers, politicians and journalists that could help or hinder your campaign.

Internally, you want to know:

- Who are the members you want to involve in the campaign? How much do you know about them?
- How can you strengthen relationships within the branch/organisation?
- What relationships do your members have with allies in the community?
- How strong are those relationships?
- How can you build on the ones you have and develop new ones?

In terms of external actors, think about:

- Who could be helpful?
- Who could be a barrier?
- Who do we need to win over?
- Who do we need to neutralise?
- What are the interests of those who have the power to give you what you want, and what do you need to do for them to get them on your side?

The form below will help you to work through a power analysis. The factors listed are just examples. Feel free to add others and adapt them to your own campaign.

Power analysis form

What are the union's strengths and weaknesses in terms of winning this campaign? What are the threats to our success? What opportunities could we take advantage of? List them below.

Factors to consider	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities
Level of organisation			
Resources and assets			
Experience and skills			
Knowledge and data			
Contacts and community engagement			
Public awareness and support			
Relationship with press and media			
Economic context			
Political context			

Relational one-to-one conversations

Relational one-to-one conversations are the mainstay of community organising. They are the means to build and maintain relationships. They are a way into networks. They establish a relationship in times of calm that can yield benefits in times of crisis.

A relational one-to-one conversation:

- is a meeting with the purpose of initiating or maintaining a public relationship
- is polite, but not to excess; the aim is to get to know the person you are meeting with
- has no certain agenda; though you can certainly have definite goals that you wish to achieve through the relationship – and even within the space of one conversation. If there is an agenda, it is to reveal the other person's self-interest and discover what it is that produces strong emotional reactions in them, and to probe for the reasons
- is not a note-taking exercise, though it is often useful to jot things down afterwards
- is a networking exercise – writing down contact names and numbers is good
- establishes one's credentials, though these will vary widely: "I am speaking to all new families in the area"; "We are running a campaign on low pay"; "My school is doing some research on..." The credentials will help to allay the instinctive suspicions of people who feel the probing interest of someone they don't know so well.

Four key components for a successful one-to-one:

- it should be a reciprocal conversation, so share your story too
- it should be a probing – and not a prying – conversation, with the emphasis on asking 'why' rather than 'what'
- it should be focused on the motivation and self-interest of the individuals involved – what makes them angry/ happy/ sad/ excited.
- tension and agitation should not be sacrificed purely on the grounds of politeness.

Focus

The agenda of the individual meeting is the other person; their stories about their family, their work, their community, their affiliations, their hobbies and interests. The key question is not the 'what' question, but the 'why' question. Why is something important? Why are they interested in this or that? Why do they value something? Why do they act on some things and not on others?

Direction

You are searching for the often-personal grounding for other people's public action. You're looking for depth. To find depth in others you have to avoid generalities, chitchat, ideology, selling, whining, projecting and being obsessed with tasks.

Probing versus prying

There is a difference between probing (exploring for some specific thing, focused, surgical) and prying (looking for everything and nothing, unfocused, ripping the lid off someone). This is where the tension between public and private comes into play. If you probe for the personal grounding of public action, people will understand the tension and distinction.

Who to carry out individual meetings with

- followers
- peer leaders
- potential allies
- people with more power
- talent (people with potential to lead).

The shape of an individual meeting

- opening – name, credential (all important), context (getting to know people in the area), maybe something about yourself
- middle – them (who they are, why they do what they do, depth on a few things, not necessary to cover everything)
- end – questions to you; references (other people to meet with; gives some sense of their network)
- evaluation and notes – not in the meeting. Afterwards, in the car or on the train. Key stories, impressions, and details.

Remember that every individual meeting does not need to be emotionally profound or traumatic. Do not get the impression that the only good individual meeting is one where someone bares his soul. Be careful. This gets people nervous about the public-private tension, communicating that more personal matters are always more important. It also doesn't give people a sense that there are different kinds of excellent individual meetings. These sessions go best when you have a variety of top-flight individual meetings.

Listening campaigns

What is a listening campaign?

A listening campaign is a focused effort to build community and identify concerns and priorities in a specific neighbourhood/workplace or organisation. It is accomplished through one-to-one or small group meetings facilitated by leaders. These meetings – also called 'relational' meetings – are 45-minute to one-hour face-to-face conversations in which people share their own stories with each other, helping them better understand their ideas and concerns (see *Relational one-to-one conversations*, p26).

The outcome is a new relationship in which a group of people feel linked to each other and have identified common experiences and concerns. A listening campaign intends to identify the issues for members of the group, strengthen the connections between participants and find and develop new leaders. Listening campaigns often lead to the development of initiatives/campaigns/programmes that arise out of the common concerns.

A listening campaign can also help a group more clearly shape its vision and find out where it is now and where it is going in the future.

How to organise a listening campaign

Identify the questions you want to ask. This will depend on the point of the campaign. The general aim is to get people to talk about how they experience life in their community, to identify the issues that they care about and to suggest concerns that they would like the organisation/local authority to address as part of its public agenda.

Examples of questions to ask:

- What is the most significant thing happening in the lives of you and your family?
- What are your concerns about living and working in your community?

- What would you most like to see changed?
- What do you think the council, your branch, school etc should be prioritising?

Identify small groups of five to 10 people who could be asked to meet for one hour, either in the workplace, public space (pub, café, community centre) or someone's home. This could be done by department, by street or by organisational affiliation.

Trained 'listeners' should lead the discussion, ensuring that everyone introduces themselves and that the key questions are answered. But bear in mind, this is a conversation, not a survey. The point is simply to encourage people to talk, not to grill them.

A recorder should take notes. There are model forms in this toolkit that can be used to record participants' views.

Results of the listening campaign should be collated and key conclusions produced. Where possible it would be good to take these conclusions back to a larger meeting of the group for comment and ratification. In some cases you will want the group to vote on their priorities from amongst the issues identified.

The forms below can be adapted for use in collecting and collating results of the listening campaign.

Form for recording results of one-to-one or group interviews

Leader name:	Date:
Community/organisation/workplace:	Subgroup:
Interviewee(s):	
Contact information (if relevant):	

Key issues (in order of importance):	A key campaign issue?
1.	Y / N / Don't know
2.	Y / N / Don't know
3.	Y / N / Don't know
4.	Y / N / Don't know
5.	Y / N / Don't know
6.	Y / N / Don't know

Any direct quotes:

Interviewer's reflections

Did you feel moved by the stories you were told? Should the politicians or decision makers hear them directly?

Did you think this person/group would act on these issues?

How much difference do you think action on the top priority would make to the person's life?

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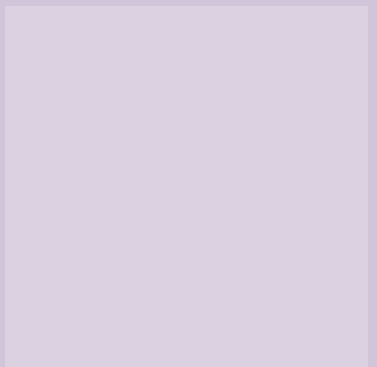
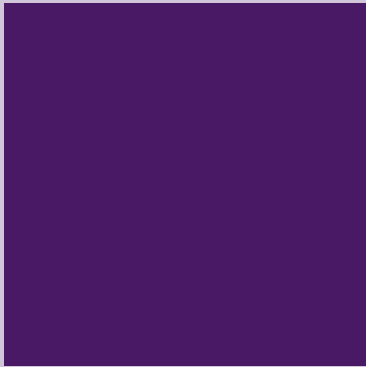
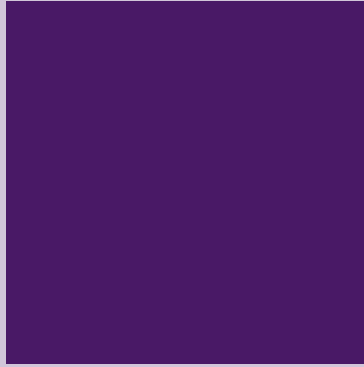
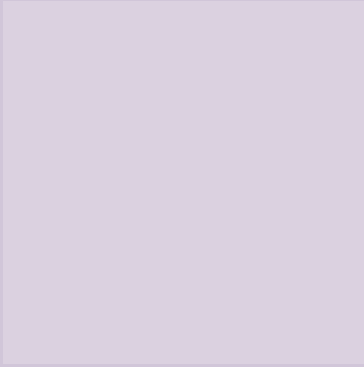
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