

Somebody Ought To Do Something

"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has"

Margaret Mead, Social Anthropologist

Chapter One Running a Campaign



CASE is an education group that campaigns for only the best for all children and relies entirely on membership fees and donations.

Join now by sending your name and contact details with a cheque for £15 (£5 concessions) to CASE, 98 Erlanger Road. London SE14 5TH.

CASE

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Chapter One - Running a Campaign

In General

First be clear about your aims and strategy. How can you get what you want? Who do you want to influence? Is it a local or national issue, or both? Who are your likely allies? How can you achieve your aims? What are the best tactics to use?

The most effective campaigns will be broadly based, involving everyone - parents, teachers and governors and possibly students. Potential supporters are more likely to be encouraged if they know that local parents are strongly represented.

Your campaign should aim to be cross-party and non-party political.

You will need to get a local debate going about the issue. Find ways of getting the views of professionals across such as headteachers and teachers. Your Local Authority should be pressed to make information available.

Your campaign will need to be able to anticipate, and be ready with answers and facts and figures to answer challenges. Try to be proactive by making news, for example, by getting the support of local well-known people. Don't be too depressed about bad publicity it may encourage more supporters to get in touch.

Keep in close touch with CASE.

Forming a campaign group

There are several strategies you could use.

If you are completely on your own you could start by writing to the local press suggesting that interested people get in touch with CASE. You could offer an article to CASE for publication in our magazine CASEnotes. We can then pass on the details of any respondents enabling you to call a first, informal meeting.

You could start by personal contact. Hold a small meeting at first, perhaps in your home and invite friends to bring one or two other people they have contacted locally who are likely to be supportive. If you think it would be useful, invite a CASE representative to come to a subsequent meeting. Be sure to collect the details of those who attend, including names, addresses, phone numbers and how they can help.

If you are sure of some local support you could call a public meeting. If you do, ask CASE to suggest high profile speakers and refer to our leaflet entitled Organising Public Meetings.

Publicising your campaign

Decide on a name for your campaign and how you want to launch it. You might want to call a press conference, issue a press release or organise an event or demonstration which will attract the press and create local interest. If you have the funds, put an advert in the local press.

The CASE leaflets on Dealing with the Media and Organising Public Meetings will be useful.

CASE Groups

Even if you have given your campaign its own name, you might want to set up a local CASE group which would consist of a minimum of five individual members. Ask CASE for membership forms and a draft constitution. (CASE relies on its membership, so we hope you might have many more members!)

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Providing contacts

As soon as possible - and certainly before you go public - choose a spokesperson (or preferably two) who are willing to give their names and numbers (including mobiles) as local contacts. Ideally they should be available during working hours to new supporters wanting to help. The contacts also need to be familiar with your supporting evidence and willing to speak to the press.

If you can organise a dedicated phone line, fax and email for your campaign it will be very useful. Email is a good way of keeping in touch with supporters and the press.

If you know anyone with the IT skills set up a website. It is now one of the easiest ways for people to access information about your campaign.

Give CASE your contacts' name(s) so that we can pass them on if we are asked.

Funding your campaign

You will need funds to cover photocopying, printing, postage, and phone costs, and to pay for hiring meeting rooms and travel costs for speakers and your representatives. You may have to rely on individual donations to get the ball rolling and start the publicity. Your first meeting might be financed by a "whip round" at the end but you cannot continue indefinitely in that way. Make sure that fund raising keeps pace with costs.

You will need a bank account and a treasurer who will need to keep at least simple accounts initially (e.g. an account book or a spreadsheet). To open an account you will need to sign "mandate" forms and you will probably need to provide minutes of a meeting in which the aims of the campaign and the names of the agreed signatories of the cheques are recorded. Ask your local bank or building society about community accounts.

Get as much help in kind as possible from supporters - for example printing, photocopying and designing leaflets. Many parents, teachers and governors are experienced fundraisers. Draw on their experience from raffles to barbecues. Fund raising events can also raise spirits as well as money.

Ask for donations at every opportunity - on your leaflets, at your meetings and on your website. Don't forget to include an address to which cheques should be sent.

Networking

- Building networks will be essential. You need to try and speak to as many groups as possible. Use the supporting evidence collected for the campaign spokespeople; keep it simple, calm and clear but show people why you think your issue is so important.
- Using the "cascade" model. Get a supporter to invite their friends to a small briefing meeting their home. Follow-up by encouraging all those attending to hold similar meetings with new invitees but using the same format and briefing.

Schools and Governors. Contact other schools in the area to see if they share the same problem. You could do this via any local federations, eg of governors, Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)s or teachers:

Try to contact the Chairs of Governors in local schools to see if they share your concerns. They can be contacted via their school who will pass on a letter. You could ask to come and speak at a Governing Body Meeting. Some authorities have a Governors Forum and if you have a supportive governor they could also raise the issues there or you could offer to send a speaker

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Parents. Use existing local networks of parents to publicise your cause. Leave leaflets in places which parents regularly visit, for example clinics, doctor's surgeries, sports halls and swimming pools. The Local Authority website or local libraries will have lists of useful places

Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Try to contact the PTA, through the Chair or Secretary. You could offer to speak at one of their meetings or, if they are already supportive, see if they will help with leafletting or speaking to parents.

Community groups. Offer to speak at meetings of community organisations. Ask for donations if appropriate and get names and contact details of supporters.

Teachers. Try and get some high profile organisations to support your campaign publicly. Local unions representing teachers and support staff may share your views and can provide valuable support. It is usually easiest to contact local branches of Unions, via their regional or national office, which you should find in the phone book or their website.

Try to find local celebrities who will support the campaign. The press are more likely to print stories if they have well-known names attached.

Speakers

Agree a speakers' briefing pack to include a list of points you want to make. This will help people who are not used to addressing meetings and enable you to share this work out among the campaign group volunteers. (See "Organising Public Meetings" for useful information)

Lobbying

Governors. If the issue affects more than one school, it may be appropriate to lobby governors of other schools in the Local Authority (LA) area. Contact the National Governor's Association (NGA) to see if there is a local Governor's Association. Your Local Authority's Governor's Services section may be willing to provide the names and addresses of the Chairs of Governors which will also appear in the school prospectus or can be contacted via the school. If your supporters have children at a particular school, you should also focus on parent governors. Get in touch with your local Parent Governor Representative (PGR) through the LA.

Councillors. You will need a list that shows which Councillors represent which wards, so that supporters can get in touch with their own Councillors. It should be available from your LA offices, their website or the libraries. Note - "Education" is now often under the heading of "Children's Services".

Council Meetings

You could also lobby relevant meetings of the Council, giving out leaflets and trying to speak to local councillors as they go into the meeting. Most meetings are open to the public so you can observe them (I.e. Listen but not speak). You may also be able to submit a written question in advance or try to get sympathetic councillors to ask questions on behalf of your campaign.

Councils now have a system of Cabinet government, with Cabinet Members responsible for a specific area of work. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services will be a powerful figure to contact for local issues. There are also review committees and overview and scrutiny panels for Children's Services; you can find out who the other councillors are on these and also lobby them.

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Within the Town Hall, there will be a support unit for councillors and you can ask staff there for information.

Members of Parliament

If you are not satisfied with the answers you have had so far go to see your MP.

Your MP will hold regular constituency advice surgeries for which it is best to try and make an appointment. Find out when the surgeries are held by contacting your MP's office at the House of Commons (020 7219 3000). You can also send an email to the address listed on the parliamentary website www.parliament.uk

If you do not know what constituency you are in, there is a section of the website which allows you to look up your constituency and the name of your MP by entering your post code. You can also look in the local paper, library or on the council's website.

You can ask for a meeting with your MP at the House of Commons, if this is convenient. Before you go, make sure you have prepared your case carefully. Take a short briefing which sets out the issue. Try to set another date to see the MP when he/she has had time to act on your behalf.

What your MP can do for you:

- highlight your case in a speech in the House
- ask questions and speak to Ministers on your behalf
- arrange deputations to see Ministers or meet with Ministers, usually at the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
- host a meeting at Parliament to which you can invite MPs and other campaigning groups. Be aware that you will need to have high profile speakers and/or a campaign that is attracting a lot of interest to get MPs to attend.
- sign Early Day Motions (EDMs) which are a way for MPs to set out a case and encourage other MPs to support it. (They are an indication to the Government of the strength of parliamentary support for a particular issue.)
- Contact your LA or other official bodies on your behalf.

You might want also want to contact prospective parliamentary candidates or prospective councillors, if there is an election due.

Leaflets

At an early stage you will need to produce a leaflet explaining the local campaign. Make your approach as positive as possible. You will probably find that as the campaign goes on you will need to produce new leaflets with a different focus.

The leaflet should provide a way to contact the campaign, set out your aims and ask for donations. It should also be eye-catching with perhaps a photo or other graphic. Make sure the campaign name is very visible – ideally you want a name or logo which quickly identifies your group that you can produce on any campaign literature. Keep to short sentences and paragraphs that get over your message in plain English. It is cheaper to print in black and white; if you use colour, make sure the colour can be photocopied effectively. Make sure that you get a quote from any commercial printers and that you have the means to pay promptly.

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Petitions

Petitions are useful to demonstrate the extent of your support and as a means of getting publicity when they are presented. However, once they have been handed over you will need to keep up pressure in other ways.

You can collect signatures by standing outside primary schools, playgroups and nurseries or by going to other places where parents are found such as sporting events and school festivals. Find out where schools' parents' meetings are being held and ask permission to come with petition forms. Shopping centres and stations may also be good places to hand out leaflets.

Organise meetings for people to hear speakers and sign petitions or small gatherings in people's homes to sign petitions and for those attending to take forms away to arrange similar meetings.

Ask schools to pass on your petitions their PTAs or leave them somewhere prominent in their entrance halls.

Letters

Large numbers of individual letters from your supporters are far more effective than "standard" letters. Some of the people you can write to are:

- the Local Authority Director of Children's Services
- the Councillor (Cabinet Member) with responsibility for children
- your local councillors
- your local MP. MPs are likely to respond to large numbers of letters on a particular issue.
- the local and national press.

It is also always worth writing to a newspaper in response to any article you see which relates to your campaign.