

## 4in10: The London End Child Poverty Project: Campaigners Toolkit 4

### How to Engage the General Public in your Campaign



Crowds march towards Trafalgar Square on October 4<sup>th</sup> 2008 at 'Keep the Promise' a march and rally coordinated by End Child Poverty and attended by over 10,000 supporters

#### What is public campaigning?

Public campaigning is the process of creating and mobilising public pressure in order to achieve the goals of a campaign. This can consume vast amounts of time and physical resources when compared to direct lobbying. Just because you have lots of supporters who want to campaign doesn't mean to say that every campaign should involve public campaigning actions.

Equally this doesn't mean you should *avoid* public campaigning. It can be a great way of motivating and mobilising your supporters, and if you demonstrate widespread support for your issue this will help put pressure on decision makers. The key thing to

remember is to have a clear aim and audience in mind, and to be sure that public campaigning is the best way of affecting your audience to reach your goal.

## How can I publicly campaign?

There are a vast range of campaign actions that you can utilise, from very small solitary actions to the much larger, involving hundreds or thousands of people. Here are some ideas of the types of activities you may want to consider.

- **Put up a poster or display** - You can do this in your school, union, workplace, church or in a local shop. Download our easy to print poster from the website at <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/london/why-end-child-poverty/how-to-get-involved-in-campaigning-62/> or contact the campaigns team to request some leaflets advertising 4in10. We can also supply you with local data to make your display relevant to your borough.
- **Find an event** - If you don't have time or resources to organise an event yourself, then ask for stall space or give a talk at an established event. Often there are lots of local events, fetes and festivals going on in your area, particularly over the summer months. Good places to start your search are <http://www.free-events.co.uk>, or <http://london.indymedia.org.uk/>. The latter website also has a simple process through which you can advertise your own events or write articles on your campaign. To upload an article follow the simple instructions on the site (for guidance on working with more mainstream media see Toolkit 3).
- **Give a talk** - It's a great idea to give a talk at your local school, workplace, church, union, or other community venue to promote the campaign and encourage people to join. Often people don't believe poverty exists in the UK and having a discussion can help people realise the scale of the problem. For London facts and additional support with speeches and presentations please contact us – we'd be happy to help.
- **Run a stall** - Organise a stall to promote 4in10 and your specific campaign. This is a great vehicle for displays and petitions. Make the stall fun and eye-catching with some of our materials and designs of your own. (If you are doing this in a public place, you may need permission, get in touch with your local council to make sure)
- **Organise a petition** – The more specific the statement the better, e.g. asking a set of decision makers to take a specific action. However, petitions can still be useful even if you are asking people to sign up to register concern about child poverty in your area. This is a great way of getting potential supporters details as well as producing a document which supports your cause. Try to get email, mobile phone numbers and address details from people who sign up, so that you can contact them in future.

- **Consult** – If you are working for any length of time on your campaign, you will be far more effective if you find out what the public you are trying to engage with think about child poverty in London and about your activities. It is useful to get people's ideas with traditional surveys asking specific questions, but you may also want to consider consulting in a more general way, such as just asking people to share their concerns about child poverty in your borough.
- **Use new media** – There are a wealth of ways you can get the public involved online, as well as in person, if you have access to and feel confident using the internet. It is easy to create a facebook group (go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), follow the instructions to create an account if you don't already have one, and create a group). To manage a list of email contacts and send messages round to everyone services like 'Riseup' <http://riseup.net/> are useful. Full instructions are on the webpage. Whether you simply contact people by email or do this through a social networking website like facebook, try to do this when you want them to take an action, preferably involving them getting out and meeting up with other campaigners locally. Don't forget to make use of our website at [www.4in10.org.uk](http://www.4in10.org.uk)  
- We can advertise your campaign and events if you contact the campaigns team.



Stilt walkers and a young campaigner at Keep the Promise, October 2008

- **Ask campaigners to adopt symbolic dress** – This has become increasingly popular in recent years. It is normally done on a national or an international level, like wearing a red nose, poppy or wrist band in support of your cause. This can also involve people dressing in a certain colour on a specific day. With a small scale campaign in a London borough it may be a good idea to do something as simple as produce some badges and ask your supporters to wear these.
- **Organise a demonstration / rally** – If you have the time and resources and you think this will be the most effective option for involving members of the public or pressurising decision makers, this can be a useful campaigning activity. Pick an area and date likely to get you noticed and linked to your campaign, for example assembling outside the council offices on the day that they are meeting to finalise a new housing strategy you want to see changed. It is very important when organising a big event like this that you ensure it will be as visible as possible both to the decision makers you are trying to influence and to the public, through your visibility on the day and through media coverage. If you want to march and block roads rather than assemble in one place you should contact the local police to tell them of your plans. For any demonstration planned within one kilometre of Parliament Square you will need to apply for permission at least six days in advance from the Metropolitan Police Commissioner. If you don't have time or resources to organise something of this scale on your own, 'piggyback' on an existing event with a similar theme by attending and advertising your campaign through banners and placards you can take along.
- **Make it colourful** – Demonstrations / rallies can be fun and will make better pictures if you make them as colourful as possible. Dress up, make large banners advertising your campaign issue or child poverty in London generally, paint your faces, make large puppets. Engage supporters in the making of materials beforehand to involve them more with the event. Noise can also be good, from inviting drummers to creating home made noise makers yourselves, like shakers filled with dried beans or rice. The more noisy and eye-catching you are the harder to ignore you will be.
- **Organise a publicity stunt** - This is a public action that is likely to attract media and public attention to your campaign. Stunts can be fun to organise and carry out, and can be a very effective way of getting media coverage for your campaign messages. If you can be creative with your stunt and make it relevant to your campaign, you increase the chance of getting it covered, especially if you can make a good image for newspapers and television. In this way, if you don't have the support, time or resources to organize a large demonstration, by being creative you can reach the same audiences. A stunt can be as simple as several people getting together to hold up giant cardboard letters spelling out a message, like '4 in 10 London children live in poverty'. Use your imagination.
- **Attend a public meeting, or hold one yourself** - There's nothing like a public meeting for getting people fired up about the issues they are concerned about, drawing public and media attention to your campaign and challenging decision-makers about their policies. If you are already involved in local groups, or local community activities you could ask that a theme of one of your meetings be child poverty.



**End Child Poverty's Supporters Gather in Parliament Square in a pre-Budget publicity stunt, 2009**

### **Whatever you do, aim for originality**

Campaigning has a long history, so tactics will most likely have been used by groups before you, but you should always aim to be as original as is possible. It is one of Community organiser Saul Alinsky's 'Rules for Radicals' that you should aim to go outside of the experience of your target decision maker, which means that once a tactic has been used it is then within the target's experience and so a change of tactic is needed.

### **Keep in Close Contact with the London Campaigns Officer**

4in10 can support you with your campaigning activities in many ways, and can advertise this both to members and online. Get in touch by phone or email to discuss your ideas and find out how the 4in10 team can help, from providing further resources to linking you up with other campaigners in your area.

**Please remember to let us know what you are planning – Particularly if you want to campaign on behalf of 4in10: The End Child Poverty London Project.**

**Your campaigning has the potential to make a difference to thousands of children living in poverty in your local area – Why not begin now?**