



Local campaigning toolkit

AN INTRODUCTION TO CAMPAIGNING

Campaigning is about making life better for people affected by MS. It's about working together to influence decisions made about services, facilities or care in your local area to change them for the better.

Top tip

Unless you're an MS Society volunteer, you won't be campaigning on behalf of the MS Society – instead, you'll be campaigning on behalf of your local community. This means you shouldn't use the MS Society brand in your campaign.

Top tip

If you decide to start a local campaign let us know how you get on. You can email us at campaigns@mssociety.org.uk

1. Why campaign?

You're best placed to know what needs to be changed in your local area, and ask the decision makers to make these changes happen.

You can campaign for change on a real range of issues. Some examples of campaigns organised by people with MS include:

- Campaigns to protect services, such as access to specialist nurses or wheelchair services.
- To raise awareness of MS among decision makers in a local area.
- To stop the closure of local services like public toilets or to protect a specialist nurse post.
- To make more services accessible for wheelchair users.

2. Steps to build a great campaign

You'll need to carefully plan your campaign to ensure you're reaching the right people and to make sure your campaign is a success. Here are some things to think about.

Your campaign aim

You should start by identifying the problem and work out:

- Why is this an issue? What's the impact on people living with MS in your community?
- Who is affected by your problem?
- How can you change it?

Try to find out as much as possible about the problem before working out what needs to change.

What are you asking decision makers to change? Writing a few short bullet points on the issue and the outcome you're calling for can help you stay focused when writing a press release or speaking to decision makers.

Be sure to keep these messages consistent throughout your campaign.



Top tip

The MS Society works with politicians every day – contact us at campaigns@mssociety.org.uk if you would like any more information and to let us know you'll be getting in touch with your local political representative. This will help us ensure our conversations are consistent, and we may be able to help your campaign.

Your campaign targets

You'll need to work out who makes the decisions about your issue. Some questions to consider are:

- Who makes the ultimate decision about this?
- Who else can help influence them? Who do they listen to? Are there any other decision makers that get a say?

Key decision makers to consider are:

- Political representatives, e.g. your Member of Parliament (MP)
- Local health bodies, who make decisions about how money is spent in your area, e.g. Clinical Commissioning Groups in England
- Local service providers, e.g. rural transport providers
- Local councils

➤ Find out more about influencing local decision makers in our **local decision makers** factsheets.

Gathering evidence

You'll need evidence to back up your campaign. Your evidence will be crucial in convincing decision makers that something needs to change.

Examples of evidence you can gather include:

- The number of people affected in your area. To find this out you may need to carry out a survey or poll.
- Supporting statements from local health professionals, like GPs or nurses, explaining why they support your campaign.
- Facts about MS. You can find out more at mssociety.org.uk/what-is-ms
- Local newspaper articles about the issue you're campaigning to change, or other information or announcements on the issue.

If the evidence you need isn't publically available, you can try writing to the decision maker in charge to get this for you, or ask your MP or councillor to write on your behalf.

You should use your evidence in meetings with decision makers, or when speaking to the press.

Data protection laws mean that you have to be careful about how you collect and share personal stories – always ask for permission to use stories before presenting these to a decision maker.

Top tip

Think carefully about the timing of your campaign so that it can have the most impact. For example, budget decisions take place at certain times of year, and once a budget is set, it can be difficult to change funding.

Top tip

Personal stories and experiences can make all the difference in campaigns. Collect as many of these as possible to share with decision makers.

Thinking about your impact

During your campaign, you should think about how successful it has been, and what else you can do to help achieve your campaign aims.

Some questions to help you do this include:

- Was the problem you raised solved? If not, why do you think that was?
- What response did you receive from decision makers and other people affected by the issue?
- What further action, if any, is needed on this issue?
- Could you change your tactics in any way?

