



ORGANISING EFFECTIVE LISTENING CAMPAIGNS

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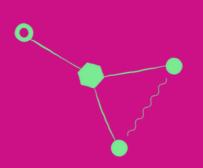
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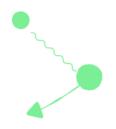
LISTEN POWER ACTION

We believe in the power of listening. We believe in the collective power of people.

We believe that the actions of people are powerful and can change things for good.







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NOTE:

This is a guide for community groups, membership bodies, institutions and other registered organisations with appropriate safeguarding processes and procedures, health and safety policies and insurances.

The information provided in this guide does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice; instead, all information, content, and materials available in this guide are for general informational purposes only.

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 place, organisation or community of interest. It is accomplished through 'one-to-one' listening conversations or small group meetings facilitated by community organisers, local leaders or other facilitators.

These meetings - also called 'listenings', 'relational meetings' or 'raps' – last for up to an hour. They are face-to-face or online conversations in which people share their own stories with the community organiser and/or each other. They help those involved to better understand each other's perspectives and experiences and gain a shared picture of life in the community.

The outcome of a listening campaign are new relationships in which groups of people feel linked to each other and have identified common experiences and concerns. A listening campaign intends to identify the issues for community members, strengthen the connections between them and find and develop new leaders. Listening campaigns often lead to the development of initiatives, campaigns or projects that arise out of the common concerns. During the listening campaign, as well as gathering people, community organisers will gather important information that, when analysed and collated, can be used as a source of power to plan and support collective action.

A listening campaign can also help the community organiser to shape their vision more clearly, reflect on their current practice and create plans for the future.

> I believe we can change the world if we start listening to one another again. Simple, honest, human conversation.

> > **MARGARET WHEATLEY**

HOW TO ORGANISE A LISTENING CAMPAIGN



Step 1 - Build a listening team and identify your community

Before starting your listening campaign you need to think about who will be the listening team. Think carefully about how you will ensure that your listening team will be trained and supported. Once you have your team you then need to decide the area, neighbourhood or community in which you are going to listen. What are the boundaries of the community and therefore who is included in it? Bear in mind that people in the community will have their own sense of where it is – for example, not many people will define their neighbourhood by where the Ward boundaries are. You may have external power holders with areas of influence that overlap your community so bear that in mind too.

Step 2 – Create a List of Questions

Work out the questions you want to ask. This will depend on the point of the listening campaign. The general purpose in community organising is to get people to talk about how they experience life in their community, to identify the issues that they care about and for them to suggest ideas that they would like to explore. The ultimate aim is for people in the community to come together to create change through their own collective efforts. For examples of questions to ask, see the 'Conversation Guide' on page 5.

Step 3 – Choose Engagement Methods

Decide how you will go about meeting the people you would like to listen to. This could include door knocking, pop-up listening, visiting cafes, pubs and other places people meet. It could also involve social media and connecting with people in other online forums. Remember the Reach aspect of the Community Organising Framework (www.corganisers.org.uk/framework) and make sure you are using multiple approaches to reach a diverse range of people from across the community.

Step 4 – Consider Safety

Discuss with your team how you will stay safe while carrying out your listening campaign. You should also consider how you will tackle the following issues that need to be considered when listening to people in the community and recording what they say:

- · Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- Confidentiality
- Data protection

For more information, see the 'Running a Safe, Legal and Ethical Listening Campaign' on page 7.

Step 5 – Practice with 'Warm' Contacts

Start by asking the questions you have created with people who are 'warm contacts' – members of your team, friends and family. Ask them for feedback after the conversation and use it to amend and add to the conversation framework if needed. Also reflect on your approach and how well you listened, which areas you did well at and where you could have done better. If these people are part of the community, do make sure to still include their answers in the wider campaign.

Step 6 – Do It!

Take the plunge and start reaching out to the community. Trained 'listeners/organisers' should lead the discussion, and if meeting with a small group, they should ensure that everyone introduces themselves ('do rounds'). The listeners should make sure all the questions are asked, but bear in mind, this is a conversation, not a survey. The point is simply to encourage people to talk and reflect on their thoughts and feelings. Make sure you reflect after each conversation and adjust your practice as needed.

Step 7 – Record Responses

In a one to one, the listener should take notes but if in a group you could ask for someone else to record the discussion. You may want to design a form for recording individual responses. Group discussion can be gathered on flip chart or large paper.

Step 8 – Collect Contact Details

A listening campaign is not just about gathering information, it is more importantly about gathering and connecting people and identifying leaders who will commit to take action on the issues that are important to them. The starting point for this is collecting contact details and permission to get back in touch

Step 9 – Issue Prioritisation

The listening campaign will hopefully have identified key themes and issues across the community. Once the listening campaign is finished, themes should be collated by listeners and leaders and issues prioritised. Where possible, key issues and themes should be taken back to a larger member meeting for comment and ratification and priorities may be voted upon. The results of this listening campaign are a key asset for you to negotiate with power holders and build your mandate for action. Organisations will want to find out what the information says, and also connect with the relationships built through the listening campaign. This is an opportunity to shift and share power with organisations.

Step 10 – Keep Listening

Even once the listening campaign is 'complete', make sure you continue reaching out to new people and listening to them. You could also do a 'refresh' at some point and go back to those you have listened to, thereby ensuring the information is up to date.

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CONVERSATION GUIDE

This is a brief guide for one-to-one conversations held by community organisers. It is not intended to be prescriptive – feel free to add to and adapt it for your own use. You should select the questions you want to use from the lists below rather than trying to ask them all. Remember that questions are only a starting point for a wider discussion, and you are aiming to have a conversation rather than conduct a survey.

Opening Questions

- What are the good things about the community?
- What makes you feel happy, proud or hopeful?
- What are your concerns?
- What makes you feel angry, sad or frustrated?
- How long have you lived here? How has it changed in that time?
- Where did you live before you were here? What was that like?
- What made your move to this area?
- What's it like living here this flat/house, this neighbourhood?

Setting Vision

- What do you want this community to look like in 50 years?
- How would you like the community to be in the future?
- What should this community be like for your kids/future generations?
- How should it feel to live here?

Exploring Ideas

- What ideas have you got for how things could change?
- Have you heard of any good ideas we could try here?
- How do we make the community better?
- Who/what could make it like that?
- What's stopping change?
- What needs to happen?

Moving to Action

- What's the first step you could take to make your idea happen?
- Who else might be interested in helping with your idea?
- What action will you take?
- How many people does your idea need behind it to make it happen?
- How do we know this is what people want?
- What could you do if there were more people involved?
- Do you know anyone else who I should speak to? Could you introduce me?
- Will you come out listening with me?
- I'm just going to speak to your neighbour, do you want to come too?
- What's the best way of us staying in touch?
- When should we meet again? (set a date and time!)



Post-Conversation Reflective Questions

As a community organiser, you should be regularly reflecting on your practice. Here are some questions to asks yourself after a listening conversation:

- Who is this person?
- What makes them tick?
- How passionate/angry did they seem? How much energy is there for change?
- What will motivate them to take action?
- What is their self-interest?

- What role are they playing now? What skills do they have?
- What roles might they play in future?
- What kind of support might they need/ want?
- What is my next action with this person?
- How did I do at listening to them?
- Was that a good listening? Why?
- How did my behaviour influence the process and outcome?
- What did I do well that I need to do again?
- What will I do differently next time?

General Points to Remember

- This is a dialogue share something of yourself.
- Capture stories that illustrate what drives them.
- Don't stay more than 45 minutes arrange to meet again (keeps it fresh).
- Do not promise what you cannot deliver.
- Do not do for others what they can do for themselves.
- We are aiming to create the conditions for ongoing collective action in the long term (not just get projects started).
- Use silence after your questions to provide space and time for them to respond
- Remember this might be the first time they have ever thought about the questions you are asking them.



RUNNING A SAFE, LEGAL AND ETHICAL LISTENING CAMPAIGN

IMPORTANT!

it is important to organise a safe, ethical and legal campaign which embodies the values and principles of community organising and is within the Principles of Practice

Staying Safe

During a listening campaign you may be knocking on doors, standing on street corners, going into community venues and entering people's homes. Doing any of these involves being aware of potential dangers and managing them.

You will be striking up one-to-one conversations and paying close attention to what people say, as well as trying to get them to commit to further engagement. You need to be systematic about how you record the conversations and how you hold and store the records.

You will have conversations with a wide range of individuals, some of whom are vulnerable. A conversation may uncover sensitive issues, such as health or employment status and difficult life experience. It may also be politically sensitive. A listening team must have a high level of personal integrity to ensure that people are treated with respect and sensitivity and that they or the community leaders they are working with do not misuse the listening campaign.

Key Principles

The key principles to be adhered to in a listening campaign are:

- voluntary participation
- safeguarding people
- informed consent

Click below or scan the QR code to download the full principles of practice poster https://www.corganisers.org.uk/principles



- confidentiality
- anonymity
- data protection
- safety
- accountability

Foundations of a Good Listening Campaign

- The community organising team is appropriately trained and supported to stay safe, safeguard others, build trust and to be accountable.
- The purpose of the listening campaign is explained to those who participate.
- The limits of confidentiality are understood and agreed by those taking part
- Information is recorded and stored with due regard to the level of confidentiality agreed with respondents.
- Participants can be involved in deciding how information they supply is used and consent is clearly gained for storing and using personal contact details.
- Appropriate support is offered to individuals who divulge and to those who are told about serious matters that are affecting them and/or their community.

- To uphold the negotiating power and confidence of the community, the full findings of a listening campaign are acknowledged, understood and accepted as being the intellectual property of those who contribute or input to it.
- Members of the organising team must not give information away or share it without agreement.
- The community organising team holds the data on behalf of the community it does not belong to any institution or funder.
- Reports of findings are produced collaboratively and in a format that will promote positive action and encourage solutions.
- The community organising team analyse, collate and use their listening data to inform action, mobilise people and transform power relations.

Door-knocking and Safety for your Team

A listening campaign typically involves a substantial amount of time spent door-knocking. This has the potential to be risky. It is essential to put in place risk management procedures for your listening team, for example emergency contact arrangements, and notification of location of work.

It is best to avoid lone door-knocking at first. If you or members of your listening team are doorknocking alone you should undertake Health and Safety Risk Assessments. Employer Liability and Public Liability Insurance should be checked as they can cover volunteers as well as paid staff, provided volunteers register with the organisation holding the insurance.

Safeguarding Other People

It is vital that as a community organising team you have knowledge, procedures and policies for safeguarding children andvulnerable adults. The listening team should ideally be given introductory awareness training in safeguarding and should know:

- What safeguarding means
- How to recognise potential abuse or neglect
- How to report and who to report to any concerns they have – the Nominated Safeguarding Person (this may be another agency but they need to know who it is)
- How to avoid putting themselves in a risky situation with children or vulnerable adults

Disclosure Advice

In the event of being told of serious concerns - in particular if these relate to children or vulnerable people:

Ask if the person wants support. Tell them that you will need to talk to someone else in the team. Use key statements and questions such as:

• "What you tell me is confidential, and you need not be identified in any reports, but if you tell me of any serious concern I will have to talk to someone else on our team."

• "I will have to report this. Do you want me to support you to share this with someone who can help you change the situation you are in?" (children re disclosed abuse)

"Would you be happy for me to share this with someone who can help you change the situation?

"Would you like any support or help in taking this matter further?"

"Can I come back to you about your concern?"

Have information available on contact points for appropriate agencies/helplines.

As soon as possible, contact the Nominated Safeguarding Member of your team.

Identification and DBS (Police) Checks

There is no law which says that you must have ID or a police check before you embark on a listening campaign. After all you are just going to talk to friends, neighbours and members of your community. The best way to build trust is through openness, integrity, honest behaviour and word of mouth recommendations.

However, given the low levels of trust in some communities (and fears about people knocking on doors and preying on vulnerable old people, for example) it may be worth creating some ID for your listening team. This can include a photo ID and some endorsement by a trusted local organisation if there is one (church or mosque, community centre, school etc).

Police checks are only required if you are going to be involved in specific 'regulated' activity with young people or vulnerable adults. Knocking doors and holding conversations does not fall into this category.

If you want to specifically outreach to young people and build relationships with them it is sensible to find out who in your listening team already has a police check and is cleared to work with young people and let them lead this aspect of the campaign. It provides reassurance and safeguards the members of the listening team as well as the young people. Remember to avoid holding any one-to-one conversations with young people in private.

Data Protection

It is vital that as a community organising team you have knowledge, procedures and policies for safeguarding data. The listening team should ideally be given introductory awareness training in data protection and should be made fully aware of the organisation's Data Protection Policies and Procedures or be fully conversant with their responsibilities and legal obligations as individuals under Data Protection legislation.

Information collected in a listening campaign is precious. It is the key to the organising network's power base and should be recorded well and safeguarded.

During a listening campaign you will be collecting and recording two types of information:

- People's opinions and feelings about their lives and the local neighbourhood or wider society
- 2. Contact information for the people you speak to so that you can contact them again, along with your assessment as to what motivates them and whether they are potential leaders etc.

Personal contact details should be recorded on a separate sheet from the general record of the conversation – the information, opinions and feelings expressed about the area. The person should not be able to be identified from the information, opinions and feelings expressed – this data should ensure anonymity.

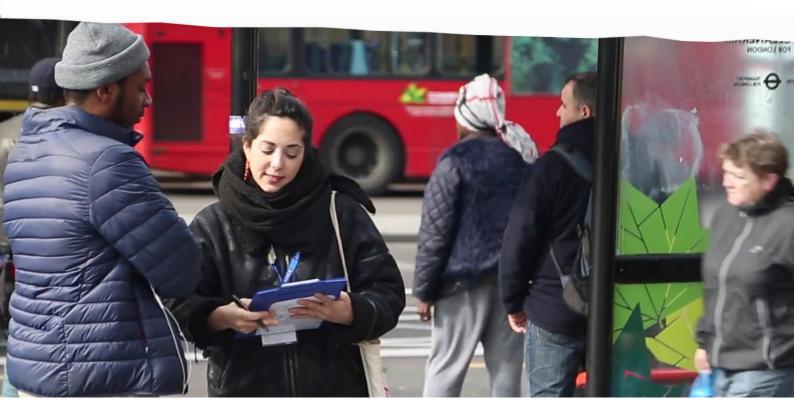
On a contact or leader record you can also note their skills, talents, assets and motivations but be very careful about making your own judgements which cannot be substantiated. People have the right to request to see the information you hold on them.

Organising Effective Listening Campaigns

We are all responsible for safeguarding people's personal data whether stored on paper or electronically, just as we would want our own data safeguarded. Always ensure your listening team have access to lockable storage for notes and contact details recorded whilst listening.

It is good practice for all members of the listening team to sign a form agreeing to keep sensitive personal data safely and secure it as soon as possible after collecting it. They should understand the importance of storing it securely and not allowing anyone else to look at it, even other members of the family.

Storing personal data electronically requires strong security e.g. password protection, encryption, so do make sure you are compliant with the legislation. Personal data should not be transferred by email or stored on removable data sticks.



GETTING STARTED

Start with "warm contacts" - try listening to friends, family, colleagues, and then meet up with others in the team to evaluate and learn from the experience.

Work in pairs in the same street/area, agree a time to meet up again, note if a colleague is invited into a house - check they come out safely! Be alert and apply common sense - make sure someone knows where you are and when you expect to be back.

Introduce yourself and the listening activity; explain to them who you are and what you are doing. Explain the open approach and clarify the boundaries of confidentiality; offer your contact information via a card or flyer; explain who you represent.

Remember this is a conversation not a survey! Build a relationship. Be yourself. Connect.

Listen and reflect back the information and stories given to you; check the person is happy with what you have heard and summarised. Try to identify their motivation, their passion or anger.

Check whether you can contact them again. Explain how you will use their contact information if they provide it. Remember, if you can't contact someone you can't move them to action!

Make notes after the conversation to help you remember the important points. Be systematic about recording the facts, opinions and feelings of the conversation.

Set a target for the number of people you want to reach and don't stop until you have got there.

At the end of a listening session meet with your team and reflect on how things went. What did you learn? What went well? What could have been done better? Were there any concerns or issues that need following up straight away?

Store your conversations and your contacts separately and securely.

Keep going!

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Community Practitioners Network

The Community Practitioners' Network (CPN) brings together community practitioners from across the UK. It provides an informal space where people come together, reflect and listen to each other's experiences. It also provides expert input and guidance through guest lectures and webinars as well as informal networking opportunities and wider issue based discussion groups.

KEY INFORMATION

What do I get and what's the cost?

Peer Learning Circles (fortnightly) Issue Based Discussion Groups Guest Lectures (Every 2 months) Expert Webinars (Monthly) Networking Sessions (Monthly) Click below or scan the QR code to find out more about the CPN www.corganisers.org.uk/cpn

£12 per month incl VAT

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