

COMMUNITY ORGANISING



LGBT
foundation



WELCOME TO OUR GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ORGANISING.

Activism can be a daunting concept.

A lot of the time, we might picture huge crowds of people, shouting, waving placards, and demanding justice. Whilst that is one way of doing activism, it is not the only way.

At LGBT Foundation we have been exploring how we can support LGBTQ+ community members and allies to self-advocate and tackle issues they care about.

In this guide, we hope to give you an overview of what activism is, how it works, and how you can organise to make a difference to the lives of LGBTQ+ people in the UK.

Let's start by asking:

WHAT IS ACTIVISM?

Activism is **any action taken to bring about social or political change**. This can be any change in the way society exists. It might be changing a law, or it might be changing people's opinions. Activism doesn't have to be huge actions, it can be anything, big or small. From signing a petition to organising a rally, it's a contribution towards a larger goal.



In this guide we are talking about community organising and LGBTQ+ rights. We want to empower you to make the changes you want to see in the world. So, if you want to have a go at doing activism, or are just up for an interesting read, *keep going!*

It is important to recognise that LGBTQ+ rights are being affected in many different ways.

Right now, specific communities face greater risks due to growing intolerance. Trans and non-binary people, LGBTQ+ migrants, LGBTQ+ people of colour, and disabled LGBTQ+ people are just some groups within our broader communities who are facing unique challenges to safety and dignity.



So when you read this resource, remember to apply it not only to broader LGBTQ+ rights but also to some of the direct issues facing marginalised community members.

WHAT ARE WE ORGANISING FOR?

It's another pretty big question, but maybe the most important one. What is it that you want? Before plunging into the world of activism, it's worth revisiting how we defined it earlier.

Activism is **any action taken to bring about social or political change**. Change is the important word here. So we have to ask ourselves **what do we want to change?** You might want to think about your own experiences to help you decide what you want to change.

We call this **lived experience**.

Has there been a time where you've been treated badly, or something has been unfair? You might be able to use that experience as the beginning of your **campaign**. Your campaign is what we're going to be planning below and will tell us what actions we need to create change.

Now that we've identified what is wrong, we need to work out what needs to change so that it can be put right. This is our **campaign goal**. It's the place that we arrive to at the end of our journey, and what we're trying to achieve.

This might be a specific law that we want introduced, changed or removed. We might want to see awareness training given to workplaces or schools. Or it might be a campaign to bring about more community support (such as providing food, housing, or childcare schemes) in LGBTQ+ communities.

You can have one, or many campaign goals, but remember, they should be **REALISTIC, ACTIONABLE, AND MEASURABLE**.

CAMPAIGN GOALS

REALISTIC

Don't overstretch yourself! "Ending transphobia" might be a good idea, but it's unlikely to happen any time soon. Start smaller, and work your way up.

ACTIONABLE

Think about all of the tasks that need to happen to achieve your goal, who will do these tasks, and when they will take place. Make sure you can break your goal down into bite sized chunks, like a to-do list.

MEASURABLE

How will you know when your goal is achieved? Make it something that can be measured, like a law being changed, or a group being created.

IDENTIFYING POWER STRUCTURES

With your goal set, we now need to figure out what needs to happen in order to achieve that.

Usually this means someone, or a group of people, making a decision. To find out who those people are, we have to look at power structures, the official order of power and responsibilities held by certain people. Understanding who has power, who makes the decisions, and what can convince or influence them, will help you achieve your goal.

There are a number of theories about power. This resource looks at a description formed collectively by community activists.

When we look at **power structures**, it's helpful to identify three different kinds of people...

The **actors** are, broadly speaking, you and your allies.

You act upon the **deciders** by using the methods below in order to convince them to make change.

Bystanders are those who may support your actions, but either cannot or will not act with you.

Whilst we may want to enact direct change, chances are you won't be in a position to do that, unless you happen to be a Member of Parliament, or someone in a very senior decision-making role. So if we're going to make change, we need to find out who has the power to make that happen.

The idea here is to find who is responsible for making the decision, and who influences them. This might be an individual, an organisation, or a political body or group. **Remember that we need to have decided what needs changing (our goal) before we can decide who needs to be influenced.**

Once you know who is responsible for the thing you want to change, you need to figure out what would make them change their mind about something. Would it be because a new law says they have to? Or because of public perception? Or something else? **Use this to help you decide what methods you'll be using to make change.**

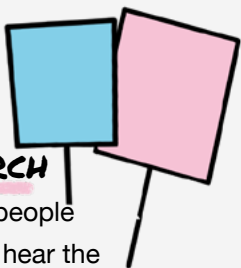
CHOOSING THE BEST METHODS

Now we need to think about how we can make the change happen. This is called choosing our methods. There are as many different ways of making change as there are things that can be changed. The method you choose will depend on what you're trying to achieve, and who it is you need to convince.

IN THE NEXT FEW PARAGRAPHS, WE'LL HAVE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR METHODS, AND WHY YOU MIGHT USE THEM.

PROTEST MARCH

This is what most people think of when they hear the word 'activism'. It's an excellent way to draw attention to your campaign, and to show how many people truly care about it.



PETITION SIGNING

If there's a very specific thing you'd like changing, especially if you're trying to influence parliament, petitions are a great way to go. They're easy to engage with, and it's by far the best way to show that you have lots of supporters.



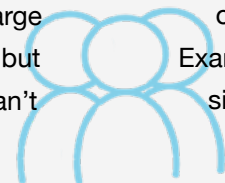
LETTER WRITING

Another excellent way of making change if there is a specific person, or set of people who have authority over the decision, such as Members of Parliament (MPs). Explaining your position, and encouraging others to do the same can show the reasons you have chosen this goal, and show that you have many supporters.



COMMUNITY BUILDING

By strengthening our communities, we put ourselves in better positions for future change making. This often involves setting up programmes that cater for people's basic needs - food, housing, childcare, education, and much more. Society at large may not cater for our needs, but that doesn't mean that we can't look after each other.



DIRECT ACTION

Direct action is a form of protest where the people taking part achieve their goals by making a change directly, instead of through negotiation and discussion. It is usually used when other methods of organising haven't worked. Examples of direct action include sit-ins, strikes and boycotts.

PARLIAMENT? COUNCIL? GOVERNMENT?

When campaigning for political change, we often have to engage in politics. In the UK, our government is made up of a lot of different groups and organisations. The House of Commons is made up of Members of Parliament (MPs), who are elected by people in elections. They propose and vote on laws. Your local council (or local authority) provides services like policing, fire, and schools in your local area. There are also devolved parliaments for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland who can make some decisions about laws, but not all.



© Rachel Adams

TIPS

REMEMBER

that all action that fights for the rights of marginalised groups should be led by those **marginalised groups**.

A marginalised group is made up of people who have one or more characteristic that makes them at risk of discrimination. In the UK, these include trans people, LGB+ people, people of colour, disabled people, migrants, and many, many more.

Your campaign should strive to look at as many aspects of marginalisation as possible and how for those with multiple marginalised identities this means experiencing overlapping systems of oppression at the same time (and as a result, the barriers this creates). We call this **intersectionality**.

This is a term by Kimberlé Crenshaw to highlight the unique and distinct experiences of Black women in America, looking at the realities of racism, sexism and class oppression intersecting. It is a theory that has been used to make sure that activism and social change does not focus on only one aspect of someone's identity.



For your campaign to be successful, it will need to include people from a variety of backgrounds and identities.

Community organising can often exclude people from marginalised groups, such as people of colour, migrants and disabled people. Spend time thinking about how to make your campaign welcoming for people with multiple marginalised identities.

You might want to read the Women's Programme's guide to inclusion, which you can find in the further reading section.

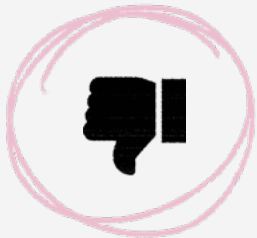
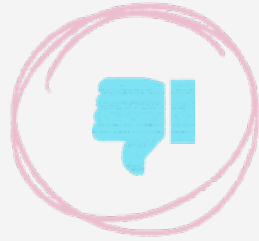
It's important to create a space that's welcoming to all people, not only because our fight is a shared one, but also because they may bring new perspectives to our campaign.



For example, many “*well meaning*” activists in the 50s campaigned for “*cures to homosexuality*” to be provided on the NHS. These campaigns did not listen to LGBTQ+ communities, and lead to more harm than good.

If your campaign is successful, you may have to deal with some opposition.

Nine times out of ten, ignoring the comments is the best option - they will only serve to distract you from your goal.



This is good when the criticism you face is limited, perhaps a few comments on social media.

However, if your campaign has gained a lot of attention and is making headlines, you might consider engaging with public opportunities to share your work in more detail.

Interviews can be a good opportunity to get your voice heard amongst a lot of people.

You can also think about putting out clear information about the problem you are trying to change and why it matters, to help more people get on your side.



HOW TO ORGANISE A PROTEST MARCH:

The Basics

1. Set a date, time and route.
2. Consider contacting independent legal observers through the Independent Legal Observer Network. They can provide legal guidance and are independent witnesses at protests.
3. Notify local police one week in advance (unless it's stationary, in which case you won't need to). You also don't need to notify police if it's "not reasonably practicable" – for example, if the protest march is an immediate response to something that just happened.
4. Promote it online, or in person.
5. Arrive early on the day, and bring equipment (first aid kits, megaphones, high-vis vests, masks, hand sanitizer, water bottles, sunscreen).
6. Clean up any litter after the march.

WHAT'S NEXT?

So you know what you want, how you're going to achieve it, and who needs to be on your side, which can mean only one thing - **YOU'RE READY!**

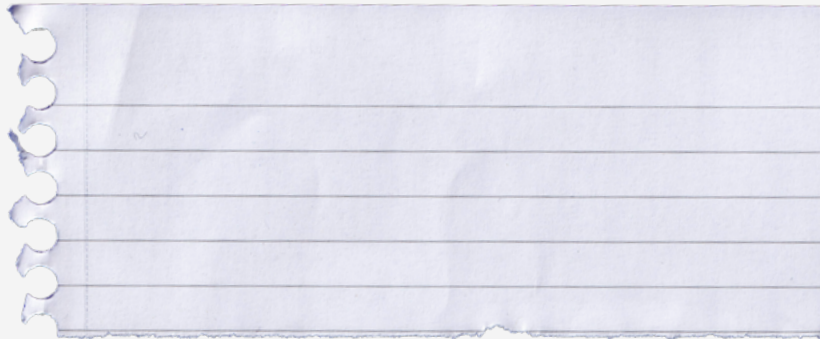
REMEMBER, this isn't the be all and end all of campaigning. There is so much more that we've been unable to cover, and more still to invent and discover.

As the world changes, so too do our ways of making change. Remember to always be adaptable in your plans, but firm in your beliefs.

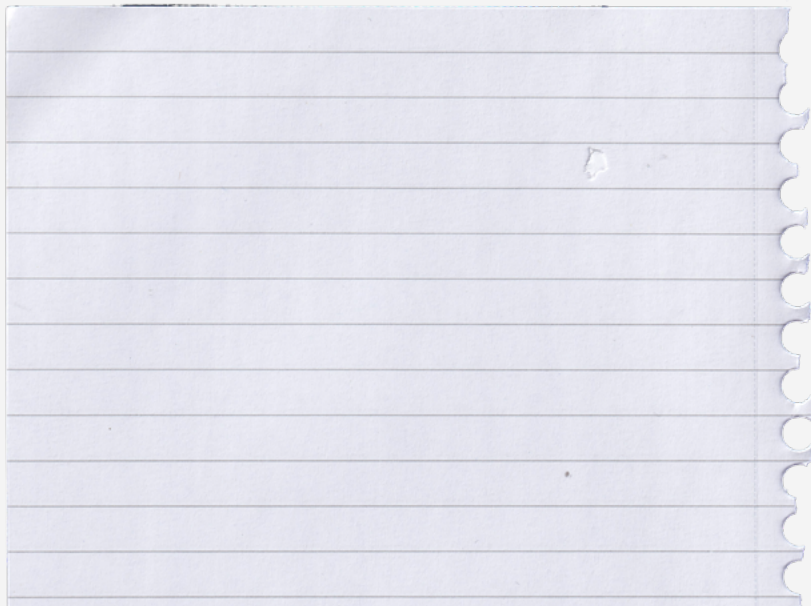
**NOW, GO OUT INTO THE WORLD, AND
MAKE IT A BETTER PLACE FOR
LGBTQ+ PEOPLE!**

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE

1. DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO CHANGE.

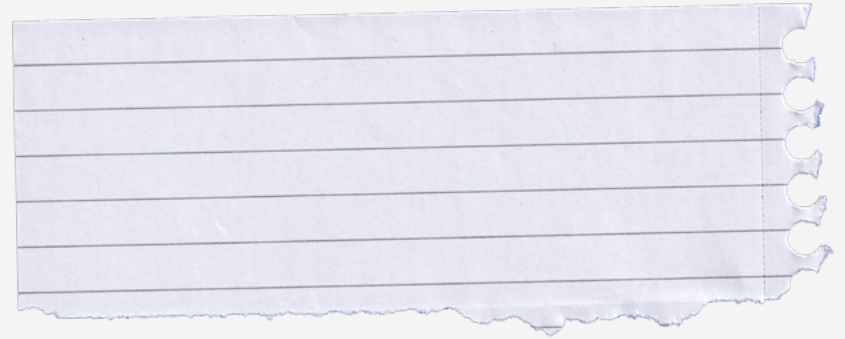


2. FIND OUT WHO CAN MAKE THAT CHANGE HAPPEN.

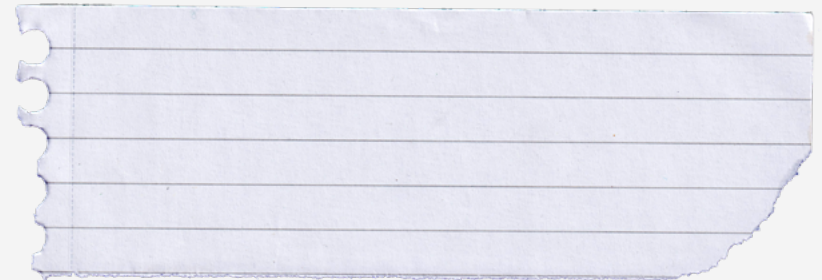


20.

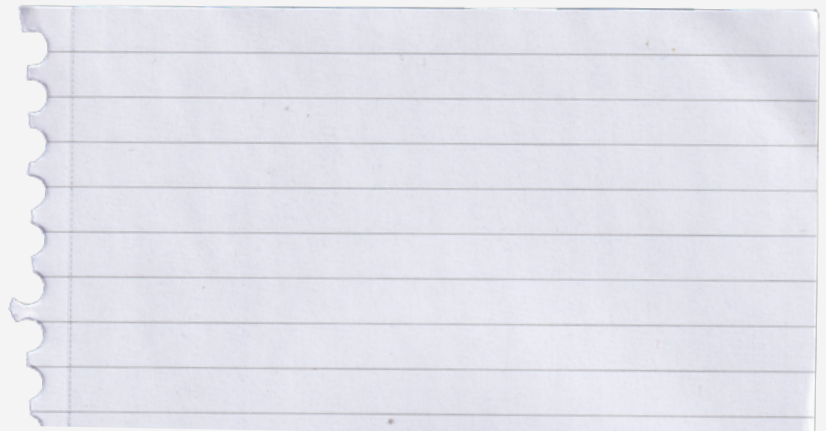
3. FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN INFLUENCE THAT PERSON OR GROUP.



4. DECIDE ON THE METHOD(S) THAT SUIT YOU BEST.



5. CARRY OUT YOUR METHODS.



21.

EXAMPLE CAMPAIGNS

Mutual Aid Groups

Trans people can often struggle to access basic services. Across the country, people have started mutual aid groups aimed at providing essential services that would otherwise go un-provided, like binders and prosthetics. Many mutual aid groups set up a fundraiser, and then share the donations with individuals in the community, redistributing wealth to others.

Queer Up North Protests

In 2008 Manchester hosted the Queer Up North festival. One of the performers happened to endorse a particularly transphobic policy in the US, yet was still being permitted to play. A small group of activists came to protest the performer, and garnered a lot of attention from passersby, causing significant embarrassment to the organisers. They had found the weakness of events like these - public embarrassment.

Occupy

The Occupy movement gained traction in 2011, demonstrating against economic inequality. Using non-violent tactics, they blocked roads and occupied buildings, focussing on shutting down major economic establishments, namely Wall Street itself.

ACORN Tenants Union

A membership organisation consisting of renters and those fighting for better living standards. They use direct, democratic action to hold those with power accountable, especially unethical landlords.



FURTHER READING

How we Win - George Lakey

Trans Britain - Christine Burns

The Activist Handbook

(www.activisthandbook.org/en/home)

Amnesty Guide to Activism

(www.amnestyusa.org/activism-guide/)

How to Organise a Protest March

(www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/advice_information/how-to-organise-a-protest/)

Including All Women

(lgbt.foundation/women/inclusion-resource)

**The urgency of intersectionality by
Kimberlé Crenshaw**

(search www.ted.com)



RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 2022

LGBT
foundation