

# Grassroots Campaigner's Guide

To building truly local campaigns to stop Brexit



## **Identifying authentically local campaign issues.**

Local campaigners have the knowledge to help us win where you are.

## **Building campaigns that work, that are uniquely local.**

Use your local knowledge to create emotive, undeniably authentic campaigns that change hearts and minds.

## **Targeting delivery to the persuadable audience.**

Understanding your audience and reaching them with effective campaign content.

# Foreword

By Cary Mitchell, Best for Britain's Head of Campaigns



This guide, from Best for Britain, is intended to help you through the process of creating local campaigns for your area. It's not a comprehensive how-to manual, but is a starting point to get you thinking about turning local issues into campaigns.

Local campaigners - like you - are vital. I cannot hope to develop your understanding and deep personal knowledge and connection with your community. But as a movement, we need to use all our assets.

That's why distinct, unique local campaigns are needed to complement our national campaigning. I hope this guide helps you build on the work I know you are already doing. Your efforts will help us change our future. Together, we'll keep us all European.

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# Being local, using your superpower

## Why campaigners should trust their instincts and local knowledge

If we're going to beat Brexit we have to work together. Sometimes that means we all speak as one, with national leadership and a single voice. But most of the time the key is to create many voices, complementing each other.

A national campaign with a wide reach and a focus on national issues needs to be complemented by local campaigns in every town focusing minds on the effects of Brexit on their communities. This guide seeks to get you started on building truly local campaigns.

### **Local campaigners have things a central campaign does not have - local knowledge and local legitimacy.**

By that we mean you know how local people think, what they care about, what makes them feel angry or happy. And you can authentically be a spokesperson for your area, because it is yours. A national campaign has neither of these things and runs the risk of appearing patronising when it tries to be local.

**National campaigns can cover the national issues. You don't need to duplicate that work in your local campaign** - find a truly local issue and build a campaign around that. Only local campaigners can identify local issues and emotions that make Brexit relevant. Only local campaigners speak in the authentic local voice and tap into your area's quirks and character.

### **Real, authentic local campaigning is vital and Best for Britain believes local campaigns must develop their own authentic local voice.**

National campaigns should support local campaigners, but we hope to show with this campaign manual that by following some simple principles and processes YOU can develop your own authentically local campaign. We must speak with many voices. We must win ALL the arguments. We cannot do that on a national scale without dedicated local campaigners like YOU.

#### **GET THINKING**

On billboards, TV, radio, social media, the side of a bus... We're surrounded by messages intended to influence us. But is it working on you?

**In 20 seconds, write down as many 'campaign' messages - adverts, campaigns, slogans - as you can remember that you've seen anywhere today.**

*Does it surprise you how few you recall? That's normal. Most of the time we all block out advertising, we don't consciously give it attention. And we all need to be aware of that attention deficit when we're campaigning - we have to factor it in when we're creating our campaigns.*

# Who are our audience?

## Know who you're talking to before you start talking

Very roughly, looking at the mass of polls in a very unscientific way, voters can be categorised into three:

- Decided definitely leave
- Decided definitely stay
- Undecided either (or neither) leave or remain, unsure, or just fed up with the whole thing

What we should conclude from this new reality is that more people than ever before have a settled opinion on Europe. Though that means there's been a hardening of attitudes on both sides, we should be heartened that people who would never have described themselves as 'European' in any way before have spent the last 3 years developing a European identity.

## Education is the key

Whether someone is likely to support leave or remain is very strongly linked to education. It is the most accurate indicator of Brexit opinion, far more accurate than other demographics (young, old, regional, ethnicity). Simply put, people who have attained a higher level of education are statistically more likely to favour remaining.

So those we have to persuade, that final third, are more likely not to have gone to university. They are unlikely to follow politics, or have background knowledge about the workings of the EU or political process. They possibly can't see what the fuss is about, they accept both that Brexit will cause a certain amount of disruption and that warnings about it are 'project fear'. They are frustrated with politics intruding on their lives, they are fed up with hearing about it, they want it over with - and soon.

We have to be realistic - we might not turn these people into ardent Europhiles, but we could persuade them that staying in the EU is the best way to put an end to the political mess. And we have to be willing to simply look the other way when we see leavers campaigning. The easiest mistake any campaigner can make is to repeat the opposition's message in an attempt to counter it. We need to create our own spaces.

## Who are the persuadables?

- Thinks Brexit is a mess, a distraction and dragging on.
- Doesn't trust any political leader.
- Believes Brexit will be bad for the economy, jobs, prices.
- Probably supports a referendum but may also think a referendum is in some way undermining the choice made in 2016.
- May not think immigration is too high, but broadly wants lower immigration.
- Top concerns: Economy, NHS and (for the Tory-remain sub-set) security.
- Doesn't believe Brexit will have much impact on their own family.
- Has low knowledge of the Deal.
- The majority of Tory Remainers and Labour Leavers are still persuadable.

# Getting started

## What makes a campaign effective?

Start by breaking down your campaign strategy into sections before you start. Approach it piece by piece and have a clear understanding of your aims at each stage:

1. **Relatability** - How does it 'feel'? Is it easily understood at gut-level? Does it fit people's existing narrative and understanding of how the world works?
2. **Buy-in** - Do people have a way to take action and 'buy into' your campaign? What is your ask? Will people know what you want them to do?
3. **Scale** - Is it reaching a large number of people, systematically? How are you delivering it?

## Getting emotional

Our instinct is to start with what we know and to try to teach people - that's what the 2016 referendum campaign did. Unsuccessfully. Feelings must always come before facts. We know people do not give political advertising their undivided attention - often our best chance is to leave them with a feeling about what they've seen. People do not remember facts.

### HOW EMOTION WORKS IN CAMPAIGNS

- Local legitimacy, a local voice as close to the real people in your area, can claim ownership and can speak for local people and local issues.
- Emotion and story cuts through far more than facts and figures. A story about a real person is much more memorable than a set of facts about an abstract issue.
- People respond to and trust 'people like me'.
- People accept things that have already happened, but do not believe predictions.

It is hard - almost impossible - to get people to think about the EU, or international trade, or even 'the economy' as something that actually affects them. The concepts are just too big to fit into people's lives and life experience. And insisting on something against the grain of their experience can make us seem out of touch and patronising. That's the 'no more experts' instinct.

## Where to start

Start with your target audience, take your local knowledge and identify the things - issues or stories - that generate emotion in your area. And use those issues as a starting point to tap into existing emotions. Starting with something familiar helps move people onto looking at a subject they instinctively don't want to engage with.

### GET THINKING

**Write a list of what makes people in your area feel: Proud, Angry, Safe, Upset, A sense of loss, Hope, Scared, Happy?** It might be the local football team, the high street, an annual event, a particular community, anything.

*These are powerful emotions. And create powerful stories. When we start with emotion we can frame our campaign and messaging to fit where people are - not expecting people to come to where we want them to be.*

# Being authentically local

## Building on emotion, creating narrative

There are no rules about what people care about. In one community, the most powerful issue might be hyper-local like the town's football team being in financial trouble; in another it might be something semi-local like problems in the local NHS; and in a third it might be seemingly not local at all, like the effect of climate change.

The clearest and best way of transmitting emotion to an audience is by using personal stories from real local people. **Your goal should be to tap into emotions and issues that people have already understood and internalised and to pivot them to Brexit.**

## Everything is local if you ask the right questions

It's easy to see the local stories in the town football team facing closure. But there are local stories to be found even in issues as 'non-local' as climate change.

- **Follow the money** - is your local emotional issue at risk of losing money because of Brexit? Does it rely on EU funding (check [myeu.uk](http://myeu.uk)), or UK government or local authority funding that may be affected?
- **Make the local emotion the story** - if there truly is a large well of feeling in the community about the issue you identified, then that itself can help you create a story. "Show how much local people care about this issue, add your name to our open letter calling for the prime minister to do something about it".
- **Find emotional people** - the most powerful, and often easiest, way to tell an emotional story around an issue is to let a real person tell it in their own words. Find someone who feels strongly about the issue and create a case study.

## Focus on: Case Studies

The case study is a staple of campaigning. Done well, a case study turns an abstract issue into a personal story. It allows your audience to hear your key messages from a real person and not an impersonal campaign. 'People like me' is often high up the list of most trusted sources of information or opinion. And people's brains are wired to comprehend and remember stories - they recall situations and emotions rather than facts.

A good case study won't just happen. Though you should use interviews and questionnaires to begin the process, you should feel comfortable using the subject's responses as a starting point for you to summarise into effective campaign material.

- **Key messages.** Have a really clear idea of your key messages (see page 7) and weave them into the story.
- **The right subject.** In selecting a case study subject, they should embody the issue you are portraying - so if your issue is the NHS, your subject must be defined by their connection to healthcare.
- **Emotion.** Have narrative and facts to give context alongside the case study, but make sure the study itself is simply the emotional and personal story from the subject.

# Taking action

## How you can get people bought into your campaign

Giving people a clear ‘ask’ in every piece of campaign content is key. If you have created an emotive, persuasive piece of campaign content your audience will want to know how they can take part and use the emotion you have given them. And by taking part, they have a stake in the campaign and instinctively want it to succeed.

### THE CLASSICS

**Petitions** - “sign the petition to call for change and show the strength of feeling” - a ‘public’ declaration of support.

**Letter writing** - “write to a decision maker to lobby for change or register your feelings” - a more private but powerful participation.

**Surveys** - “tell us your views on the issue” - a more neutral way for people to engage with an issue, even if they do not agree (yet) with your campaign.

**Fundraising** - “help us win, donate to the crowdfund” - literally buying into your campaign, spend a pound and feel ownership over its success.

**Events** - “join the discussion, take part, RSVP now” - a high-cost interaction for a target, but a good way to rally your supporters and keep them motivated.

### Focus on: Petitions

Why do campaigners love petitions? What do you get from a petition? Think about them not just as a means for effecting change (and certainly not as an opportunity to write a long detailed policy statement). Instead, as a campaigner, think about petitions as a way to build your campaign and give your target audience actions to do that feel meaningful and show public support.

- Sign ups, emails, new people introduced to your cause via an issue they care about.
- The tool itself becomes a proof point - look how many people care about this issue.
- It’s free to buy into - sign your name, click the button and feel like you’ve done something.

All those people who sign it have bought free membership to a club. The club contains people who feel the same about the issue as them. The people in the club are, by definition, PEOPLE LIKE THEM. And if the club needs help, members of the club will want to justify their decision to join. They want to be proved right. They belong, so they want to win.

### Structuring your campaign

An effective campaign uses all the actions listed here in combination. Every piece of campaign material should have a clear action. There’s nothing more demoralising than having your interest piqued by a campaign leaflet only to get to the end and be left wondering “what do I do with these feelings you’ve given me?”

A simple campaign structure could be 1) start a petition, 2) follow up with letter writing on the same subject, 3) ask petition signatories to donate 4) use a survey to draw people in, followed by asking them to sign the petition, 5) hold a public event to discuss the petition or the issue.

# Messaging

## Getting your point across and being clear

We have covered how to structure your campaign, how to develop actions to buy people in and crucially how to identify emotive and uniquely local issues. Now what you need is:

- One clear message
- Repetition
- One clear action

Remember the exercise on page two? Messaging doesn't need testing if you make it clear.

## Clear at a glance

Any campaign's message has to be clear at a glance. A leaflet generally has a life span of 20 seconds between being picked up to being chucked away and you have those brief moments to imprint your message.

That's why non-verbal things like images and emotions are so important - they can be registered in an instant without the recipient even noticing. Turning your message into narrative, or a story helps people identify with it. And it helps them remember. A real story from a real 'person like me' can be extremely powerful.

### GET THINKING

**Create a key message - Choose one emotional issue from your list earlier, on page 4, and write three sentences:**

1. Why should the audience care?
2. What do you want the audience to know?
3. What can they do about it?

*What you've written are key messages. From these three short sentences you've got the start, middle and end of a petition, or a campaign leaflet or any sort of campaign material. Don't be tempted to add extra thoughts, asides or information. Keep to what is necessary to get the message across - anything else is there to lend legitimacy (do these people know what they're talking about) and create tone (are they patronising, cheeky, angry, reasonable).*

## Messaging DNA

Before you start creating any sort of campaign material, distill your message and your action down to one short sentence. That's your key message. How can you make sure your audience implicitly understands what you want them to know if you haven't worked that out yourself?

That key message should be on every line, every image and every part of your piece of content. You can expand that original key message statement, rewrite it, show it in different ways - a chart, an image, a metaphor. But it has to be the DNA of your campaign.

# What works?

## Crafting local messaging that's authentic and effective

Messaging is an art, not a science. It takes instinct as well as experience to make it work - and even then, there are no 'right answers'. Keep it clear, keep your audience in mind and know what you want the outcome to be.

Once you've decided your key messages you are ready to expand it into your campaign content - slogans, camptions, leaflets, emails, petitions, social media, etc. It all starts with your simple key messages which you build around to make it relatable to the audience you are targeting.

- **Language** - is your target audience used to reading tabloid news or broadsheet news?
- **Tone** - will they react well to a relaxed, personable tone of voice? Or is a more formal tone more likely to appeal?
- **Sayings** - what sort of common sayings, idioms and metaphors are likely to be familiar to your audience? Is there a local saying or phrase that proves your authenticity?
- **Examples** - tailor examples to your audience, without being patronising or assuming too much, but making sure examples feel true to your audience's lived experience.
- **Stats and figures** - big numbers and percentages switch people off, but is there a creative and relatable way to present them? Would gambling odds work, or comparison to something of similar value or size?
- **Medium** - all of the above might change depending on the medium. If you're writing a tweet you probably want an informal tone. But if you're writing a petition it needs to be formal and probably does need facts and stats.

Your local knowledge and experience is the most important thing to draw on, once you have identified the audience you are targeting. If it helps, write out a profile of a typical individual in your audience so you can keep in mind exactly who you are addressing when you draft your content.

## What not to say

**Reminders.** Anything recalling the 2016 EU referendum should be avoided. Talking about the bus, the referendum, any of the politicians involved, or even using the word 'remain' can take people back to the 2016 campaign and to the decision they made then. People's instinct is to defend their past decisions - so don't remind them. Keep them looking at the present and the future.

**Mistakes and lies.** Nobody likes to think they were tricked. Nobody wants to be made to feel stupid. If you are to persuade former leave voters, or the undecided, they need to trust and relate to you. That means they need to feel safe and that their past decisions are accepted.

**Abstracts.** Very few people know about international treaties, international trade or the ins and outs of negotiations and politics. Go to people where they are so they can relate to you. You can take people with you once you've hooked them with your story - but you have to start with local, personal and emotional.

# Delivering your campaign

## How to reach your audience

The key to delivering campaign messages effectively is to do so in high volume, repetitively in a targeted and systematic way.

Sounds complicated doesn't it? So let's look at some of the common ways to reach audiences:

Untargeted	Targeted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Posters and billboards</li> <li>● Leafleting in public</li> <li>● Street stalls</li> <li>● Public meetings and events</li> <li>● Letters to the paper</li> <li>● 'Organic' social media (ie. a Facebook page or Twitter account)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Social media advertising</li> <li>● Leaflet or direct mail delivery</li> <li>● Door to door canvassing</li> <li>● Emails</li> </ul>

All these are important. Untargeted delivery raises the profile and 'brand recognition' of your campaign. It also helps identify areas and people you should target, based on responses you receive. Untargeted delivery also has the important benefit of being easier and cheaper to do.

Targeted delivery almost always costs money. It also generally requires having data - to tell you who you need to target, where they are and how to reach them.

## Use your local knowledge

Earlier in this guide we discussed what the data tells us persuadable people look like. Your local knowledge should help identify whether there are areas or events where you can more easily reach those people. Perhaps there are particular local social media groups that count these people as their members.

Use untargeted distribution methods with an action that includes a sign-up (like a petition) to gather data that helps identify areas where your content works. And then target those areas.

Develop a systematic process for targeting the persuadable audience. Remember that the persuadable people are unlikely to be the ones visiting your street stall - they are undecided so less likely to want to volunteer an opinion. You have to go to them, wherever they are. And that is why we seek to identify issues they already care about and why we focus on emotion first.

# Summary

## Keep it local. Keep it clear. Give people actions.

If you follow the steps set out in this guide, whether you're building an entire campaign or writing a single campaign email, you should be on the right track. Particularly pay attention to the exercises in the purple boxes throughout the guide - you can use them as a way to focus your mind when putting together your campaign.

1. **Understand your audience** - resource should not be spent trying to convince those who are firmly decided.
2. **Start with emotion** - make it work for you and bake it into your work.
3. **Make your message and action clear** - if you don't know what you're telling your audience to think or do, they won't know either.

## Always use your local knowledge

Best for Britain will never give up. We will keep fighting at a national level, through our digital and real world campaigning. Through lobbying politicians and commissioning research and polling analysis. Through bringing people together to beat Brexit. We will always seek to complement your local campaigns.

There is no substitute for local campaigning and we hope this guide helps you identify truly local messaging that works for the people in your area.

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## Get in touch if you need help

Best for Britain is here to offer support, advice and help. Get in touch.

**Email:** [info@bestforbritain.org](mailto:info@bestforbritain.org)

**Sign up:** [bestforbritain.org/join](https://bestforbritain.org/join)

**Join the campaigner's mailing list:** If you would like to join *Best for Britain's Campaigners' Update* email mailing list for representatives of Pro-European campaign groups, please email us requesting to join. Get regular emails from our Head of Campaigns with insight into what we're doing, how you can help and our plans for the future.

## Our tools

- Lobby MPs using Best for Britain's simple online templates at [HeyMP.uk](https://HeyMP.uk)
- Find out where EU funding goes in your area at [MyEU.uk](https://MyEU.uk)
- Read Best for Britain's [Grassroots Guide to Building Pro-EU Alliances](#)



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