

Best Practice for Local Groups

NB: We welcome your feedback as to whether you have found this document useful and what suggestions you have to improve it. This will undoubtedly be an evolving document and there will be opportunities for local groups to share their best practice throughout our network.

Contents

- 1) Introduction to Momentum and its objectives
- 2) Principles of local groups
- 3) Attendance at local group meetings
- 4) Facilitating a meeting
- 5) Making decisions
- 6) Dividing responsibility
- 7) Ideas for Action

1) Objectives of Momentum

As the successor to the campaign to elect Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party, Momentum is a Labour Party focused organization and its structure must reflect that. Momentum seeks to strengthen the Labour Party by increasing participation and engagement at local, regional and national levels. Furthermore, Momentum is committed to supporting the Labour Party winning elections and entering government. It seeks to use its base in the Labour Party and Labour movement to reach out to the 99% of people who are not currently in any political party, spread socialist values and increase Party membership.

What does Momentum want to do?

• Organise in every town, city and village to secure the election of a progressive left Labour Party at every level, and to create a mass movement for real

transformative change to:

- o Redistribute wealth and power from the few to the many;
- o Put people and planet before profit and narrow corporate interests;
- o End discrimination, advantage and privilege based on class;

- o Target growth not austerity, invest to create tomorrow's jobs and reverse privatisation of railways, the energy sector and public services;
 - o Provide protection at work and strong collective bargaining to stamp out workplace injustice;
 - o Ensure decent homes for all in public and private sectors through a big house-building programme and rent controls;
 - o Support workers and their trade unions defending the interests of their members, families and communities;
 - o End discrimination based on race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or age.
- **Transform Labour into a more open, member-led party, with socialist policies and the collective will to implement them in government.**
 - **Bring together individuals and groups in our workplaces and communities to campaign and organise on the issues that matter to us.**

2) Local Groups

The majority of activity in Momentum takes place within the network of local groups. Our groups bring people together to campaign, promote Labour politics and create solidarity networks within communities.

Whilst occasionally it may be necessary to have 'top table' style meetings with a panel of speakers, it is highly encouraged for this to be the exception, rather than the rule. To ensure that Momentum achieves its aims, it is crucial that local meetings are action-focused, so that creative campaigns, events and activities can be planned and delivered. Momentum local groups must be welcoming spaces that enable people to contribute and make sure different opinions are heard. To this end we encourage local groups to:

- Be inclusive
- Be participatory
- Be empowering
- Be action-focused

The rest of this document is intended as to support you in ensuring your Momentum group fulfils these aims.

3) Attendance at local group meetings

Local groups will be able to hold different types of meetings:

1. Participatory organising and planning meetings

In these meetings, groups plan activities or campaigns, decide local priorities and make decisions for the group.

These meetings are open to members and supporters of Momentum, but not people who are members of other political parties. Please see the 'Guidance on Momentum Membership and Attendance at Meetings' document for further information.

Please complete the [Meetings and Events Form](#) or refer to your data manager to register your event so that details can be emailed out to the people in your area from Momentum's central database.

2. Public meetings, events and activities

Public events can be attended by anybody. This may also involve joint campaigns and activities with other groups who share common aims and objectives.

Please complete the [Meetings and Events Form or refer to your data manager](#) to register your event so that details can be emailed out to the people in your area from Momentum's central database and added to [Momentum's Public Events Map](#).

4) Facilitating a meeting

Good facilitation is absolutely key if a group is to be successful. A chair's or facilitator's role is to make everyone feel welcome, ensure all voices are heard and keep the conversation focused. It is not an easy job! Make sure whoever is performing this role is supported by the group. If possible, assign the role of time-keeping and note taking to another member of your group.

The following are our recommendations for inclusive, participatory and productive meetings:

- ***Sit in a circle***

We encourage groups to sit in a circle. This creates an atmosphere whereby everyone in the room is equally empowered to shape the direction of the meeting and the group. However, we appreciate that this format will not suit the nature of every Momentum meeting (for instance, when people have been invited to speak) or every venue. In such instances, we would encourage the organisers to pro-actively take other steps to ensure that the meeting is inclusive and participatory in its nature.

- **Encourage participation**

If the group is small enough, start your meeting with a **go-round**. Ask members of your group to briefly introduce themselves and share what they are hoping to get from the meeting. Inviting everyone to speak at the beginning of the meeting will make people feel welcome and more willing to contribute. Encourage people to keep their contributions brief - you may need to give people a time limit.

- **Break-out sessions**

If the group is large, to enable in-depth discussion, split participants into smaller groups to discuss a particular topic or activity. Then ask someone from each group to feedback the discussion to the whole group.

- **Make an agenda**

An agenda can really help keep a meeting on track. A facilitator can refer to an agenda to structure conversation and keep the meeting focused. Creating the agenda at the start of a meeting can be very effective. Listen out during the the initial go-round - if many people show enthusiasm about a particular topic or activity you could decide as a group to put it on the agenda. Allocating an amount of time for each agenda item is a good idea to make sure you get through all of the items in your meeting .

- **Keep it inclusive**

If a meeting is well facilitated no one person should be able to dominate it. Strict time limits on individual contributions can be really useful. Give people who haven't yet spoken a chance to contribute by asking "Does anyone want to speak who hasn't spoken yet?", and leave time for people to reply. The agenda can be a useful means to stop one person dominating a meeting. If someone keeps coming back to the same point that isn't relevant to the discussion at that time, you can remind them to keep to the current item on the agenda.

In addition, we encourage whoever is chairing or facilitating the meeting to actively encourage the participation of people who are ordinarily 'underrepresented' in political discussions on the basis of their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, religion, class, disability and educational or economic status.

- **Come up with actions**

You might want to organise your meeting in terms of discussion and action points. That means having time to discuss issues and ideas, and then with the help of the facilitator/chair, work out what tasks must be done to put the ideas of the group into practice. It might take time to come to an idea of what your group wants and feels able to do, and you needn't feel any pressure to plan fully-thought out actions or events in your first meeting. But it is helpful to have at least have some activity outlined for people to undertake between meetings. This might be to go away and research a topic that was touched upon in your discussion, or to develop a plan for an activity that there wasn't time to flesh out in the meeting.

There are lots of great facilitation resources [HERE](#)

5) Making Decisions

Items which need agreement by the group - for example, deciding to put on a specific event - can be formulated into proposals to be approved. Anyone in the group should be free to formulate a proposal, and you should allow an opportunity for people to offer amendments. A proposal doesn't need to be a written document, and may just be a simple sentence e.g. "Momentum Thanet will put on a Democracy SOS event on 15th April outside Thanet Sixth Form College."

Different groups approve proposals in different ways. The most common method for making decisions is to put proposals to a **majority vote**. However, many groups also aim to come to **consensus** on decisions made. A consensus decision-making process requires that all members of the group are comfortable with a proposal before it passes. This has the advantage that no-one will feel excluded and encourages all viewpoints to be taken on board. However, it can be more time consuming than a simple majority vote.

We leave it up to local groups to settle on how they democratically make decisions. You can find more information about consensus [HERE](#).

6) Dividing Responsibility

Successfully dividing responsibility is key to the success of any local group. Distributing roles can share the workload of keeping a group going and organising campaigns.

Like with decision-making, different groups divide responsibility in different ways. The most traditional way is to elect **officers** to certain responsibilities. For example, this is how your local Labour Party branch will work. This has the benefit that responsibility is divided in a transparent and democratic way. However, it's important to keep in mind that you want your groups to be participatory and inclusive; a place where someone coming to a meeting for the first time feels empowered to affect the direction of the group and take their own initiative in promoting campaigns.

Many social movement and campaigning groups have moved away from organising around elected officers and instead divide responsibility through creating **working groups or core teams**. A working group is a group of people who meet or communicate outside of whole-group meetings to develop ideas on particular themes. For example, you might have a working group committed to popular education, one committed to fundraising and another to social media. A working group is open and has the advantage that all new members can get involved in developing particular aspects of your group's activity.

7) Ideas for Action

Campaigning

Please see the National Campaigns that Momentum is coordinating (<http://www.peoplesmomentum.com/campaigns>). Local groups will have the opportunity to get involved in organising local events as part of national campaigns. The contacts for your groups will always be informed of our campaigns and the resources available to local groups. Of course, feedback will be very welcome as to what different resources your group would find useful.

There are probably already lots of people doing amazing community work in your area. We strongly encourage you to make contact with groups with similar aims to your own and draw on the wealth of expertise in your area. Momentum groups should seek to link up with and amplify existing work where possible. You might also want to start your own local campaigns in line with Momentum's aims and objectives.

Popular education

A radical Labour agenda is unlikely to get support from the mainstream media. In the first few months of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership we have already seen the media go into full attack mode. Therefore, we believe if the values we support are to gain traction in society we will have to disperse them from the bottom up. Local Momentum groups are encouraged to organise popular education events where people can learn about the issues that matter to them and that shape our public life: What is Austerity? How does the housing market work? Is the NHS failing? Will scrapping Trident make us all unsafe? If we don't develop answers to these questions in our own communities, the field will be open for the Tories and their media allies to dominate their own self-serving assumptions.

Canvassing

Momentum is committed to Labour winning elections, and thus canvassing will be a key activity for Momentum groups. CLPs are generally very good at organising canvassing campaigns, so it's likely you can take their lead and mobilise for events they organise. Momentum groups can provide support and encouragement for members who are new to canvassing or have only recently joined the Labour Party.

Linking to Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs)

The Labour Party is organised at a local level into constituencies and branches. These are open to all Labour Party members and affiliated supporters in that area. Momentum local groups should build positive links with CLPs and local branches. A key motivation for Momentum is to help re-energise CLPs and their place within communities. We hope all Momentum supporters will work with everyone in the Labour Party to build a movement for change. If Momentum groups organise events independently we expect them to invite their CLPs, and to mobilise to support CLP campaigning events.

Linking to trade unions and other parts of the labour movement

Momentum local groups should build positive relationships with trade unions. A key motivation for Momentum is strengthen the labour movement by encouraging increased participation and engagement with the union movement.