

State your case: how to write a campaign briefing

A community group's guide to researching and writing a campaign briefing

A campaign briefing is simply a statement of the aims of your campaign, with supporting facts and information to back up your case. You can use it:

- ♦ As the basis for your campaign leaflets and website pages
- ♦ To help you write press releases, petitions or letters
- ♦ To give you the facts at your fingertips when giving media interviews
- ♦ As background information for anyone who wants to support or find out more about your campaign

Your briefing should be one or two sides of A4 (no more than 750 words). Use a large font size (14 point text will allow most people to read it).

Agree what your campaign is demanding, and who from

Before you start writing, you will need to do some detailed thinking and talking within your group.

Decide on a few specific objectives for your campaign – short statements of exactly what you are trying to achieve.

Your objectives should be:

- ♦ **Specific:** If you ask for something vague like “improvements”, you can't be sure that everyone is talking about the same thing.
- ♦ **Winnable:** Campaigning for the impossible quickly becomes demoralising.
- ♦ **Easy to understand:** You will lose supporters if they cannot follow your argument. Write all your campaign materials in plain English.
- ♦ **Agreed democratically within your group:** The group is likely to work better together on the campaign if everyone has been involved in a democratic process to decide the aims. If you claim to represent people in your community, you should also do some research into their opinions, so that you know your campaign will have a broad base of support.



- ♦ **Targeted at the right people:** Find out before you start who has the power to change the things you are concerned about, and make sure your demands are addressed to them.
- ♦ **Up to date:** It is useful to put a date on your briefing, so people know when it was produced or last updated. You should regularly check key facts and add any new information that you have.

Get your facts straight

Existing information

There may be lots of useful information and facts out there that you can use to support your argument.

Campaigning organisations and charities

There are lots of campaigning organisations and charities that may already have the information you need. Try searching the internet for key words relating to your campaign. Search for terms like “road safety campaign” or “housing campaign” to find organisations that are already campaigning about the issue you are concerned about and may have information and resources to help you.

Statistics

The UK government, local councils and other organisations do lots of research every year. There is information out there about all sorts of things affecting your local area. For example, you could find out whether your neighbourhood has worse air pollution than the national average, whether people are less likely to be employed, or whether people are more likely to have poor health.

This kind of data is available from Brighton and Hove Connected¹. Have a go at searching what you need on their website. If you are having trouble using it, get in touch with them and ask for help.

Information about all areas in the country can be found on the Office for National Statistics website².

Doing your own research

If no one else has done research to find out what you need to know, you can do your own.

There are lots of different ways of gathering information. The kind of research you do will depend on what you are trying to find out, and how you are going to use the results.

Some of the research methods you may want to think about are:

- ♦ Straightforward counting (e.g. traffic levels, recreation facilities in the area, etc)

¹ www.bhconnected.org.uk

² www.ons.gov.uk

- ♦ Interviews with people about how they feel about the issue
- ♦ Surveys of local people about their opinions, and facts about their lives (e.g. if you are campaigning for a playground, you could find out how many households have young children, and whether people want a playground)

Have a look at our information sheet *Designing and Using Surveys* for more help.

Who will you ask?

If you want to get a sense of what *everyone in general* thinks about a local issue, it is important to ask quite a lot of people. If there are 1000s of households on your estate, and you just survey 5, you probably won't get information that represents the whole estate. If you survey 100, your information is more likely to represent everyone. It is also important to ask people at random, rather than just asking people you know (who might be more likely to agree with you). A good way to do this is to go to every 10th house or flat.

If you want to get a thorough understanding about how *some people in particular* are affected by an issue, you could ask fewer people, but ask them for more in-depth information. For example, if you are campaigning for drop-kerbs in the area, you could interview wheelchair users to get a more personal understanding of how the issue affects them. This information won't represent the views of *everyone* on the whole estate, but it can still provide valuable evidence for why drop-kerbs are needed.

What will you ask?

Try to ask questions that allow people to give their own opinions.

If you say in your survey: "this new local development is a total scandal isn't it?", people may feel pressured to agree with you. Instead, ask a question like "Do you agree or disagree with the new development?". This way, if everyone says they hate the new development, this data will be much more valid and useful to you.

Be careful with people's information

Only collect personal details (such as names and addresses) if you really need to. Store them securely, and destroy them when you no longer need them. For more help with this, see our information sheet *Data protection for community groups*.

Writing the campaign briefing

What to include

- ♦ Briefly describe the problem or issue.
- ♦ Quote any facts you have to support your case.
- ♦ State clearly what action you want to be taken, and who should do it.
- ♦ Provide information to show that this is a good solution to the problem you have identified (e.g. if you are campaigning for traffic calming you could refer to another area of the city where this has been introduced and the reduction in the number of accidents in that area).

- ♦ Include information to show that there is a lot of support for the proposal (e.g. '100 people attended our Public Meeting on 3rd September' or 'over 1000 people have signed our petition').
- ♦ Don't forget the basics: Include a date, contact name, phone number, email address, postal address, and website if you have one.

A few tips for writing clearly

- ♦ Use headings to guide the reader through your argument.
- ♦ Use a bulleted list to separate different points.
- ♦ Keep your sentences and paragraphs short.
- ♦ Avoid jargon, abbreviations and technical language.
- ♦ Make sure everything is spelled correctly and always ask someone else to check it through when you have finished.

Example campaign briefing: Busyroad Tenants' Association

Traffic Calming Campaign Briefing October 2018

Children on the estate

Busyroad Estate is eight streets of houses and two blocks of low-rise sheltered housing; approximately 700 dwellings in all.

- ♦ 500 children under 16 live on the Busyroad Estate.
- ♦ 100 of these live in Speedy Hill and Deathtrap Road, the two busiest roads in the area. [BTA survey, September 2018]
- ♦ The area has a higher proportion of children in the population (22.4%) than in Brighton & Hove as a whole (16.6%). [Figures from the 2011 census, accessed from Brighton and Hove Connected].

Car ownership on the estate

Although census figures show a relatively high level of car ownership in the local area, our own survey has revealed that on the estate itself, most households (55%) do not have access to a car. [BTA survey, September 2018]

Traffic and traffic calming

The estate is bordered on two sides by major roads, which are busy throughout the day. Several of the residential streets are regularly used as rat runs by commuter traffic and by commercial vehicles travelling to and from the nearby industrial estate.

- ♦ 80% of the children on the estate are not allowed to play outside on their own [BTA survey 2018]
- ♦ 75% of adults recalled playing out alone at that age. [BTA survey, September 2018]
- ♦ Of those households who do have access to a car, 70% drive children to and from school.

- ♦ There is a noticeable increase in traffic levels on the estate at the time of the school run. This makes walking or cycling to school more dangerous.
- ♦ In other areas of Brighton & Hove, where traffic calming measures have been introduced, residents report a clear reduction in the use of residential streets as rat runs, and a general feeling of increased freedom and safety for pedestrians, especially children. [Correspondence with Eversocalm Community Association, 2018]

Our proposals

The Busyroad Tenants Association Traffic Calming Campaign calls on Brighton & Hove Council to:

- ♦ Work with local schools to develop safer routes to school for children who walk or cycle, and to encourage parents not to increase traffic levels by driving their children to and from school.
- ♦ Work with the Tenants Association to draw up a joint plan for traffic calming measures which will alleviate the main problems caused by traffic in the area. Such measures could include road entry treatments, speed humps, lower speed limits, and additional pedestrian crossings on the roads surrounding the estate.
- ♦ Consult fully with all residents of the estate and take their views into account in the final development of the traffic calming plan.
- ♦ Begin to implement the agreed traffic calming plan by January 2020.

How to find out more

To find out more information, for a copy of our survey results, or to support the campaign, contact:

Busyroad Tenants Association
Secretary: Mary Jones
43 Backgarden Street
Brighton
Tel. 01273 123456

More information

For more help with running campaigns, see our information sheets on:

- ♦ *Designing and using surveys*
- ♦ *Writing a news release*
- ♦ *Organising a petition*
- ♦ *Organising a letter-writing campaign*
- ♦ *Radio and TV interviews*