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# Successful Campaigning

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## Campaign essentials

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Race for Justice is quite a complex campaign in that there is no simple, easy to implement solution that will bring about greater equality in the criminal justice system. But that doesn't mean we should just accept the current state of affairs as inevitable, because it isn't. Race for Justice is a broad-based coalition of voluntary and community groups who have experience, expertise and ideas about ways to bring about positive change. It can be used as an umbrella to help focus local action and incorporate what you are doing to address issues of local concern.

There is no simple recipe for staging a successful campaign; causes and issues are very different, as is the readiness of policy makers, government and the general public to hear the message and do something about it. But there are things you can do to maximise your chances of success, including:

- Having a clear message
- Being clear who you want to influence
- Targeting your message to the right people
- Getting the timing right.

## The message

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The key message of Race for Justice is that the racial inequalities at the heart of the criminal justice system (CJS) are unacceptable and must end. Allied to this is the need for voluntary and community organisations to play a greater role in helping to deliver policies and services that will help to reduce BME involvement in the CJS. Race for Justice is supported by organisations working specifically with offenders, former offenders and their families, but also in housing, education, employment, health and other sectors that have a role to play in supporting BME communities.

The campaign coalition does not accept that men, women and young people from BME groups are more likely to be involved in criminal activity than anyone else; there must be other reasons for the disproportionate numbers of people from ethnic minority groups in the CJS.

The central message of the campaign can be adapted to your own circumstances and concerns; there are many paths to a more fair and equal CJS for BME communities.

## Who you want to influence

At the same time as you clarify your message, you should consider who it is that you want to hear it – and what you want them to do about it. Perhaps it's a local politician, employers' organisation, trade union, educational institution, senior police officer, prison governor or head of your local council. Whoever it is – and it may be several people or institutions – you need to be clear about who they are and what you would like them to do.

You should also consider how your message will be received. If you are very outspoken, the people you are trying to reach may react with hostility and seek to marginalise you as on the fringe. Some may even try to question your legitimacy as an organisation working to right wrongs. You need to ensure that what you say is credible and based on the facts. A great advantage you have is that you are informed by experience and as a local group you are part of the solution, not part of the problem.

## Targeting

The core message of your local campaign activity needs to be targeted to those with influence, authority and the power to do something about it. Think through who you are targeting and what they think and believe, bearing in mind that some may be opposed to what you have to say. You can reach people in many ways, directly or indirectly. For example:

### *Direct routes*

- Letter writing to targeted individuals, such as your local councillor, MP, or police commander.
- Meetings with specific individuals to put your case face to face – or with a public meeting as a way to reach a number of individuals at the same time.
- Phone calls – can be one way of reaching individuals directly.
- Email – another route to named individuals.

All of these approaches have pros and cons. With email, for example, it's quick and easy, but you can't be sure that your message has actually been read. A face to face meeting is probably the best way of communicating your message, although it may be difficult to set one up, depending on who it is you are trying to influence.

### *Indirect routes*

- Media work – targeting your local press, TV and radio can help to get your cause onto the local agenda and ensure it is read, seen or heard about by a lot of people.
- Organising a petition – gathering signatures to support a specific cause is one way of demonstrating the strength of feeling and support for your cause.
- Stage a protest march – another way of showing the strength of feeling for your campaign.
- Websites – if your organisation has a website, you can put information and/or links about Race for Justice and your local campaign activity onto the site.
- Leaflets/posters etc – other possible ways of reaching a number of people with your message.
- Partnership working – sometimes you may have more influence with the people you really want to reach if you work indirectly with partners who have better links with your target audience.

As with direct ways of reaching your audience, there are pros and cons to all of these methods; some require more time and effort; others require a budget. The key is to decide what will work best for you in light of your own circumstances and experience.

## Timing

Getting the timing right is another important factor in successful campaigning. If you release your information at a time when who you are trying to reach is on holiday, or when another issue is taking up a lot of time and gaining a great deal of attention, then it may not be as effective. A telephone call or note can be one way of trying to find out when would be a good time to deliver your message.

## Other factors

In addition to the factors outlined above, you may need to consider other factors to help you determine how to best go about any local campaign activity. For example:

- How much time you can spare on this activity.
- How many supporters you have who are willing to be involved – and whether you should consider partnerships with like minded organisations to increase your impact. Race for Justice is a broad-based coalition; you may find some good useful links with other organisations.
- Whether you'll need any money – and whether any budget is available to support local campaign activity.

## Evaluation

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You should give some thought to how you will judge the success of your campaign. Ways of measuring success might be quantitative or qualitative.

Quantitative measures tend to focus on overall numbers of people reached as a result of your activity. For example:

- How many people you want to reach through your activity – and whether you did in fact reach them, eg
  - x leaflets distributed
  - x face to face meetings with decision makers
  - x mentions in the press and local radio – and x people reached as a result.

Qualitative measures tend to focus on the quality of the outcomes as a result of your activity. For example:

- x policy change will lead to greater equality for BME communities
- the meeting with our MP led to him signing the petition and gaining more publicity for our cause
- the press coverage we received was positive in nature and successfully communicated our key messages.

In practice you will probably use a mixture of these types of measures to try to evaluate how successful you have been.

## Other sources of help

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Other fact sheets in this campaign pack give advice on ways of reaching people and organisations to get the issues raised by Race for Justice onto the agenda. These include:

- Campaign overview – giving background and rationale for the campaign
- Working with the media – practical tips to help you gain positive media coverage
- Influencing your MP – ways of reaching your elected representative
- Facts and figures to help make your case
- The legal framework – useful background to equalities and race relations legislation
- Sources of information – web links to provide further information, depending on your focus and interest