

Making Change Happen

Adapted from Oxfam's Youth Ambassador's Guide ['Change the World One Step at a Time'](#)

Making change happen starts here. When people get together and take action, it changes the world. In the past, it's meant the end of slavery, apartheid and the Berlin Wall. More recently, it's meant slashing developing world debt, increasing aid to poor countries and banning the use of landmines against civilians. All of it made possible by brilliant, passionate people like you.

People who won't accept the way things are if it means others suffer. People with the courage to raise their voice and do something about it. So get your friends together, take action and change the world. Step by step. Starting right now.

What's taking action?

Put simply, when you take action, or campaign it's all about:

- applying pressure...
- to get the people...
- who make the decisions...
- that affect the lives of millions...
- to do the right thing.

There are loads of easy ways to take action.

It could be signing a petition, influencing a friend, writing a letter, wearing a message on your t-shirt, or just sharing a link online. And you can do more. Put on a colourful stunt and get your message in front of the local press. Hold a debate to raise awareness of the issues.

The What, Who, Why of making change happen

Before you get started, ask yourself these three questions to make sure your actions really make a difference.

WHAT change do you want to happen?

Every campaign needs a clear aim – like cancelling the debt of developing countries, or introducing a new tax on banks. With that in mind, make sure you know what you're asking your 'target' to do. You might also think about what you want other members of the public to know about the campaign, or what message you want them to take away.

WHO can make that change happen?

Think about your 'target' – the person, people, institution or company with the power to make change happen. Remember that your action might be focused on the main target (for example, the Prime Minister) or on someone who can take up the issue on your behalf (like your MP). Or it could be an individual making simple changes to their daily life.

WHY should they listen to you?

You may need to make the case that it is morally unacceptable for your target to ignore your action. Or they might be persuaded by the idea that they are lagging behind their peers or competitors and should do more to keep up. You'll also need to prove that lots of other people care about the campaign too. This is especially true for AMs and MPs, whose job it is to represent the views of people in their constituency to the Assembly and Parliament.

Keep it simple: talk to your friends and family

'Be the change that you wish to see in the world' – Mahatma Gandhi

Making change happen begins with the simple steps individuals can take. Part of that can be talking to your friends and family. You might be passionate about reducing climate change, stopping brands from using child

labour or reducing the environmental impacts of clothing production but your friends and family might be less interested. Here are a few handy tips for engaging friends and family:

Listen and be relevant: Find out where people are at. Sounds obvious, but you won't get far if you shower someone with facts and figures if they're not interested. Have a think about what might motivate them. Suggest small changes they can make that fit with what they're into, rather than making them feel guilty about things they're not doing.

And practical: You could start by getting them involved in what you're already doing. Whether that's an upcycling 'make do and mend' group or going to an event.

Know your facts: People like solid, easy to remember statistics they can take away with them.

Be honest: Having a positive impact on the world isn't easy. The world is a complex place and there is no perfect answer. Try to engage in dialogue rather than argument. Genuine conversation reinforces the message that as human beings concerned about the world, we've plenty in common with each other, even if we disagree.

Keep smiling: We're part of a diverse world. Everyone has their different opinions and passions. You're not going to convince everyone, but that's okay. Discussion is important and a valuable way of developing our own thoughts, opinions and values. It's important to be respectful of different viewpoints and being open to learning from others.

Petitions: Get creative

A popular way of raising awareness and getting support is to start a petition, and encourage as many people as possible to sign it as a way of taking action. In the past, petitions were always sheets of paper with lists of names and addresses. But they don't have to be like that.

Get creative, be a bit different. You'll attract more support, and get the attention of the person or organisation you're trying to influence. 5 steps to generating ideas for your petition

1. Identify some creative people to help you. Think about the campaign and what you want to achieve.
2. Get them to suggest their ideas for a creative petition. Email random thoughts, draw pictures, scribble on post-it notes, or set up a quick-fire ideas session.
3. Have a group discussion about the ideas, and note the pros and cons of each.
4. Vote for the best idea: list all the ideas on a big sheet of paper and give everyone three votes (they can vote for three separate ideas, or vote for one idea up to three times).
5. Put the idea with the most votes into action.

Lobbying: Use your influence

The UK government is the target of many campaigns because it makes decisions that impact on poor people, here and in other countries. And that's where your Member of Parliament (MP) comes in. If you want to target the Welsh Government you will want to contact your Welsh Assembly Member.

Your AM/MP can influence the relevant department or minister on your behalf. That's why lobbying your AM/MP is a frequent campaigning strategy. The term 'lobby' gets its meaning from the fact that people who wanted to raise concerns with their AM/MP used to meet them in the entrance hall – or lobby – of Parliament. You can still talk to your AM/MP in this way, but there are a whole load of other ways to influence what they do on your behalf.

Influencing your AM/MP

Here are some ideas for influencing your MP (you can find out who your MP is at theyworkforyou.com):

- Write them a letter or send them an email
- Make them a video
- Find them on Twitter or Facebook
- Invite them to your school or youth group
- Attend one of their 'surgeries' (a regular time and place when AMs/MPs are available to meet constituents).

Of course, your AM/MP isn't the only person making important decisions that you might want to influence. Other people you can target are Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), local councillors, your headteacher or principal, the manager of a local business or supermarket, the chief executive of a company.

Top tips meeting your AM/MP

If you are able to arrange a meeting with your AM/MP, use these tips to get the most out of the occasion.

- Research your AM/MP. Which political party are they a member of, and where does that party stand on this issue? Have they shown any interest in this issue before? Are they a member of any government committees that are relevant to your cause? You can find loads of useful information at theyworkforyou.com.
- Prepare some questions and requests.
- Be nice. You may want to meet them again, so it's good to build up a friendly relationship.
- Ask your pre-prepared questions and demonstrate how much support there is for change from other young people. Take the opportunity to present any petitions that you've been working on.
- Appoint one person to take notes on the meeting, and note down any promises that your AM/MP makes. Take a photo of your meeting too – you can share it with people who have supported your campaign.
- Get informed and research the issues so that you can impress your AM/MP – but remember that they don't expect you to be an expert and that the most important thing is to show your concern
- Make sure you get in touch with them afterwards – thank them for listening to your concerns and remind them of any promises they made.

Events

Events are a great way to have a good time, take action and raise awareness of your campaign. Campaigning events come in all shapes and sizes. From fashion shows to music gigs, or from film screenings to sports competitions, your event can combine something fun with taking action and changing the world.

The Why, Who, What, Where, AND When of running an event.

Why do you want to hold an event? It helps to have a really clear aim right from the start to help you plan.

Who do you want to come to the event?

What groups of people will help you to achieve your aim? An inspirational speaker, your MP or even a celebrity can get your event on people's radar.

What? Think about what sort of event would appeal to your target audience. Use your imagination to make sure your event is one to remember.

When? During the day, in the evening or at a weekend? Avoid dates when there are other events going on, and check you have enough time to organise everything.

Where? Think about how many people your venue holds, whether you need to get permission to use it, and any related costs.

10 steps to planning your event

1. Appoint an event manager who is responsible for the overall planning. They'll keep an eye on progress, and arrange meetings when they're needed.
2. List the individual tasks that need to be completed. Allocate each task to a team member.
3. Create a timeline – and stick to it. Put the tasks in order of when they need to be completed by, and give each one a deadline.
4. Think about the cost of your event and whether you have the money to cover it. Aim to minimise your costs or hold your event for free. Find out if you can use school facilities for free.
5. Consider any possible health and safety risks of your event. If you're not sure, check with a responsible adult.

6. Plan an agenda for the event itself – when will everything happen? Think about what to do if things run over or finish early.
7. Decide what action you want people to take. They could sign a petition, donate money, or write/film their messages of support.
8. Produce leaflets, print-outs, action cards or other materials with information about the campaign that you can hand out or display at the event.
9. Promote your event well in advance with posters, flyers or emails, Twitter, Facebook.
10. When the event is over, get together to talk through how it went. Make notes so you can make the next one even better.

Photos, videos and stunts

A strong image, video or stunt can grab people's attention and get your message across in a matter of seconds. You can email or tweet photos and videos to your target, highlighting your issue and showing the strength of support for change. You can also use photos and videos to explain the issue or promote your campaign in your school or local community. You could also get it in the local newspaper or school magazine. Organise an eye-catching stunt and invite local journalists and photographers along to cover it.

Keep it legal: When you communicate with the public, keep within the law. Make sure you get permission – from the people featured in your videos and photos, or to use photos, videos or music which you don't own. And don't make negative public statements about a person or organisation.

Top tips for a great campaigning video

1. Think about provoking an emotional reaction, whether that's feel-good, sad, shocking or laugh-out-loud funny. Something unusual or surprising will mean it's more likely to get forwarded on.
2. Keep it short and simple. A minute is all you have before people start to switch off. If you want to go into a bit more depth, keep it under three minutes.
3. Make a clear case for change, either by appealing to the campaign target or to the general public. Include a web address where people can go for further information if appropriate.
4. Share your video on sites like YouTube and Vimeo. Clocking up video web-views is a good way to demonstrate support for your campaign.
5. Email your video to the ChangeMakers team – we might be able to feature it on our YouTube channel or web pages.

5 steps to a great media stunt

1. Run an ideas session to create the concept for your stunt. What will get your message across in an unusual and visual way?
2. Think about using humour or fancy dress. Costumes – think superheroes and world leaders – can help to grab attention. Remember that using humour may not always be appropriate for the issue.
3. Invite photographers from your school magazine or local newspaper. Make sure the date is in their diaries, and confirm with them a few days before the stunt.
4. Choose somewhere easy to get to and with good light for the perfect photo. Local landmarks can root an image to a place and get people interested.
5. Appoint a spokesperson for the day – someone to answer questions about what you're doing. And have background information such as press releases or leaflets available too.

Your action checklist:

- Find a group of like-minded people to work with.
- Know who you're trying to influence.
- Know what you're asking them to do.
- Decide what will persuade them to listen.
- Decide whether more pressure can be exerted by raising awareness more widely.
- Decide whether to use the media (newspapers, magazines).
- Promote what you're doing.
- Take evidence of the action (pictures, video, blogs).
- Know who is doing what in your team.