

# Regional Asylum Activism Briefing: How to Run a Lunchtime Campaign Group



## What is a Lunchtime Campaign Group?

A Lunchtime Campaign Group is simply an opportunity for **like-minded activists to come together and take action** to defend the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK.<sup>1</sup> You **take simple actions** - like signing a petition, tweeting a message of support or writing to an MP to raise awareness about a particular problem or call on them to back local and national campaigns for change.

Meeting with fellow activists helps give you the **motivation to take action** and also helps you **work out how to take your influencing and campaigning action to the next stage** (e.g. how to respond to a reply received from an MP, or plan to meet them at their constituency office).

Over time, participants **build up more knowledge about campaigns** to defend the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum, including the **policy changes that are needed**, and the **arguments that work best with different audiences**. They will also build up more of a **relationship with their MP and local councillor**, which can really strengthen local advocacy.

## Tips for Running a Successful Lunchtime Campaign Group

- ✓ **Identify one person who can take responsibility for communicating with the rest of the group, and arranging a time and place to meet.** Usually once a month for about an hour is sufficient.
- ✓ **Find a suitable venue.** A café with a relaxed atmosphere usually works well.
- ✓ **Bring a laptop** or two, and find somewhere with **wifi** access.
- ✓ **Contact your Regional Activism Co-ordinator and let them know when you're meeting.**
  - They will supply you with a different action each time you meet. Alternatively, you can also find the action in our 'Be the Change' monthly update or in the [Take Action](#) section of our website. If RAA doesn't have a new call to action, they can usually point you in the direction of a relevant campaign.
  - They will also be able to give you some background info about your local MPs and councillors, and priorities for action in your area.

<sup>1</sup> This briefing is provided by Regional Asylum Activism Project (RAA) to help those interested in setting up a Lunchtime Campaign Group. RAA is a project of Student Action for Refugees (STAR). See: <http://regionalasylumactivism.org/>

- ✓ When you meet, **encourage all participants to take the action there and then** (it's much more likely you'll get it done if you don't wait till later).
- ✓ **Record the action you've taken.** It's surprising how quickly you forget which petition you've signed or which model letter you've already used. Also, for letter writing actions, try to write down the number of people who are contacting each MP/ Cllr.
- ✓ For letters or 'tweet your MP' type actions, ask participants to **bring any replies to the next meeting.** Familiarise yourself with key arguments in favour of policy change [using RAA's briefings](#).
- ✓ **Mix it up a bit.** If you did letter writing at the last meeting, do something a bit more creative next time (e.g. tweet a message of you holding a message of support, compose a song and upload it to You-tube, draw an eye-catching picture). Also, how about starting the meeting off with a bit of a discussion – maybe ask participants to bring in a news story that's got them thinking, or got them angry! We can find motivation for action in all sorts of places.

## Does it Make a Difference?

Definitely! Lunchtime Campaign Groups really strengthen local advocacy and campaigning. They are a great way of giving campaigns a local flavour and making them more relevant to local communities and politicians.

MPs are more likely to take action when they believe that a real cross-section of their constituents care about the issue. Also, the more people who contact them, the harder it is to ignore the issue.

*"We meet up about once a month or so in our own time over lunch to consider how we can help each other take actions forward. We use the time to compile info, write letters and emails, share out background reading, sign petitions and take actions. It is good to talk about the issues and to encourage each other to take action, report back on responses, understand the issues and keep up to date. The main attraction for me is that I always have such good intentions to respond to campaign requests but by the time I get round to it the dates have passed. With the lunchtime campaign group we do the actions there and then."*

Victoria, Manchester Lunchtime Campaign Group founder.

*"I received 8 letters asking me to come to the Sanctuary in Parliament event. I just couldn't ignore that many people. I had to come down and find out what it was all about."* Comment during Sanctuary in Parliament event from Gerald Kaufman, MP for Manchester Gorton

*"Local activism is often pivotal to the success of national campaigns because many politicians will not take up an issue unless they are directly asked to do so by their constituents."* Mike Kaye, Still Human Still Here

## Where Next?

After running your group for a while, you may find you are ready to take your campaigning further or you may find yourselves in need of re-inspiration. Here are a couple of ideas for what to do next:

**Get others involved.** Look for opportunities to engage new allies and find common ground. If you're a student group, a Trade Union group, voluntary organisation, or simply a group of friends, think about the interests of your members and what other communities/ opinion formers/ decision makers you have access to. Encourage them to join the group or join you for a joint-action. Read RAA's [effective campaigning briefings](#) for more ideas.

**Meet your councillor or MP face-to-face.** It's often really effective to have direct dialogue with your local representative. Real stories are incredibly effective, so if you don't have someone with relevant experience in your group, you may want to team up with someone with direct experience of the asylum process for this action. Your Regional Activism Co-ordinator will help put you in touch.

**Stay inspired.** Invite a guest speaker... there are loads of powerful speakers out there who can re-motivate you and remind you why it's so important to stand up for refugees, or inspire you to develop your campaigning ideas. Why not screen a film about refugee experiences? There are also trainers (such as the Parliamentary Outreach Service) who can help you learn more about the role of your MP, and what you can ask them to do. Again, your Regional Activism Co-ordinator can help with this.



For further information, please contact your Local Regional Asylum Activism Co-ordinator  
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