Supporting campaigning – a funder’s guide

National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Campaigning Effectiveness

Changing the World

Brian Lamb
What is campaigning?

You might call it influencing, voice, advocacy, social change or campaigning, but all these activities are about creating change. At NCVO we use the word campaigning and define this as the mobilising of forces by organisations or individuals to influence others in order to effect an identified and desired social, economic, environmental or political change.

But what is important is that campaigns are created to produce a change. The impact is the real change created by a campaign – the difference it makes to people’s lives.

‘A combination of money and passionately held beliefs can create enough momentum to change the world.’

UK Philanthropy’s Greatest Achievements, Report Institute of Philanthropy

Who is this guide for?

Trusts and philanthropic organisations are showing an increased interest in funding campaigning work to achieve sustainable change. Campaigning has become a more established and mainstream way of charities achieving their purposes, yet the principles and practice of funding this area of work remain underexplored. Many funders continue to be uncertain about what is permissible and what is effective. This guide aims to address those concerns and support trusts in their thinking about campaigning as well as providing insight to those approaching trusts to fund campaigning activity.

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Supporting campaigning – a funders guide

The current context

Promoting civic action, influencing and campaigning as part of the mix of voluntary and community sector activities has long been an acknowledged part of what defines a healthy sector and helps to form the bedrock of a thriving civil society, something that has been recognised across the political spectrum.

From Friends of the Earth’s campaign to secure legally binding targets on carbon reduction to Every Disabled Child Matters’ advocacy of carers’ rights, campaigns supported by charitable trusts and philanthropy are changing the social and political landscape. Investing in sustainable change is now fully accepted and is reflected in the guidance from the Charity Commission on campaigning (CC9 Speaking Out Guidance in Campaigning and Political Activity). With continued pressure on public services a more strategic approach to funding organisations to help deliver sustainable change will become even more important over the coming years.

Over recent years there has also been an increase in campaigning by charities and with this a bigger focus on workforce skills to match that investment. With clear workforce standards for campaigners (National Occupational Standards), a professional qualification (NCVO’s Certificate in Campaigning) and a growing body of knowledge about what constitutes effective campaigning the sector can point to a track record of success in delivering sustainable change.

Public support for campaigning by charities has also grown. Campaigning is not only accepted but also expected by the public. A recent opinion poll found that over half of the public thought that charities should directly lobby government, and half of those asked ranked lobbying as the ‘most economical’ and cost effective activity for charities to engage in.1

‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.’

Margaret Mead
US anthropologist (1901 – 1978)

Trusts can therefore have confidence that funding this area of activity, when properly managed and evaluated, presents no greater risk than other areas of charitable activity. Indeed, with campaigning relatively underinvested in the UK, there are major opportunities for trusts to show leadership and have real impact. This realisation is beginning to be reflected in trust funding policies. Research shows that many more trusts are open to the idea of funding campaigning but still have concerns about the best way to achieve their aims.2

At the same time there are many voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) that wish to do more campaigning but do not have the capacity.3

With all the major political parties committed to an enhanced role for the voluntary and community sector in the coming years, trusts may want to develop their thinking about how to achieve greater impact in what will become a more complex funding environment.

Those with a clear strategy for how they want to bring about change, will be in a better position to negotiate the complex issues that will be thrown up by the changing role of the sector and the challenging economic environment that lies ahead.

3 Sarah Shimmin Challenges to Effectiveness NCVO (2007)
### Key tools for campaigning

There are a number of distinct activities that trusts can fund as part of an overall strategy to achieve sustainable change.

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<td>– aimed at:</td>
<td>– support organisations to formulate policies by consulting beneficiaries, and then advance these policies in a public setting and work together to achieve change.</td>
<td>– campaign to bring about a change in the law to support wider changes to rights, environmental protection or establish additional entitlements to services or to campaign for the law to be enforced.</td>
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<td>• researching the issues faced by beneficiaries and developing practical strategies for change</td>
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<td>– improve the capacity of organisations to take learning from research and service provision and use this to influence government and business to change legislation, policy and practice.</td>
<td>– support and develop capacity of organisations to promote and publicise in order to galvanise or change public opinion on an issue.</td>
<td>– improving the capacity of local community to campaign or take civic action</td>
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<td>– supporting particular groups to better advocate for themselves.</td>
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| Litigation | |
|------------| |
| – support legal advice to individuals or take legal action against public bodies or government to secure individual justice or achieve collective change on the basis of existing law. |
Research and policy work can highlight emerging issues or reveal unmet need and help give a voice to those without one, promoting civic responsibility and participation where none exists. But support and organisation is often needed to build capacity in communities and enable them to articulate their needs. Trusts often play a vital role in supporting the means by which those without a voice can be heard.

Raising public awareness and campaigning can multiply the effects of social investment from government or other partners that is many times greater than investment in fundraising or direct service provision. This can be directly through creation of new streams of funding or more indirectly through the creation of entitlements or redirection of funds. Many organisations are now also becoming more expert at presenting spend-to-save arguments, investments in screening or early intervention that reduce expenditure on tackling the long-term consequences of unaddressed need.

Campaigning and advocacy is sometimes the only action possible. Especially when the scale of the problem is such that it is not possible to provide an alternative to state-provided services or private provision, by ensuring that people’s rights are enhanced or protected or through creating entitlements to services.

Better public policy is often crucial to trusts achieving their aims. Research and the development of policy and evaluation of practice also provide the bedrock on which service planning depends.

Even large foundations can only contribute a relatively small amount of money compared with government and statutory agencies.

Crucially only government has the capacity to make profound and consistent difference to people’s lives through legislation and by changing the context and terms of engagement on which the voluntary and community sector operates. Trusts that want to have more influence over the context in which their funding operates will look to influence government and statutory providers about the overall terms of their engagement. In turn this will enable trusts to support other projects that will deliver long term sustainable change that has more chance of success.

As government looks more to the voluntary and community sector as both a means of identifying need and then a partner in answering those needs, trusts can play an increasingly important role in shaping the overall context of the areas in which the sector works.
Every Disabled Child Matters

Every Disabled Child Matters (EDCM) was founded to ensure better rights and services for disabled children and their families. Through a grant from the True Colours Trust they were able to employ a full-time campaigns team to pursue these aims. EDCM set about first influencing the Treasury to conduct a cross-cutting review into provision for families and children. At the same time EDCM also campaigned for a new right for carers to ensure their needs are assessed properly. EDCM had a very clear theory of change: additional support to families would alleviate the need for even more statutory help, help to prevent family breakdown and lead to better outcomes for children.

To help ensure this gained more traction in Parliament they lobbied the Treasury who helped them to initiate a cross-party Parliamentary Inquiry. This enabled the views of professionals, parents and young people to be focused directly into Parliament. As a result of the review the Department for Children Schools and Families introduced a major new service initiative “Aiming High for Disabled Children”. This programme invested £340m in local authorities to provide short-break services for families of disabled children, support for parents groups and other services as well as resources to evaluate the impact of the initiative.

A management group was also set up with Government that involved representatives from parents groups and VCOs to support the implementation of the programme and act as sounding board for further development.

Original funding has since been matched by health service funding. In addition, the statutory right for carers to have a short break was also passed into legislation with cross party support. The trust originally invested £200,000 in the campaign over a two-year period. Funding has since been renewed and ongoing campaigning activities have been aimed at ensuring that local authorities implement the initiative. Subsequently, the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation has supported further research and helped to co-ordinate an approach between funders for different aspects of the campaign. Funding from the two trusts created an infrastructure of staff and communications support that enabled the campaign to work closely with parents to support them in campaigning for better local services. This was achieved by promoting a charter for local authorities which required the authority to sign up to clear commitments about how they were going to support the needs of families and children.4

4 Case Study based on Broach et al.

Supporting change at a national and local level through political campaigning
Managing the funding of campaigning

Campaigning is a legitimate arena for charitable activity. Charity law is much more permissive than is often thought and includes a very wide range of activities. The 13 charitable purposes in the Charities Act 2006 include ‘the advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation or the promotion of religious or racial harmony or equality or diversity’, areas which lend themselves readily to campaigning and advocacy.

Key considerations for successful funding

Further Charity Commission guidelines CC9, Speaking Out Guidance on Campaigning and Political Activity, published in 2008, make clear that it is permissible for charities to undertake campaigning and political activity in the furtherance of their purposes. The guidance defines such activities as:

1. Public or awareness campaigning which is focused on public attitudes and behaviour and aimed at mobilising the public’s support for or against an issue or to get them to take action.

2. Political campaigning which is focused on trying to bring about a change in the policy of Government or public bodies with a view to either preserve or change the law in this country or abroad.

Trusts can have confidence that funding campaigning and advocacy is a legitimate activity for them to pursue. “A Charity cannot have political activity as any of its charitable purposes... However, political activity can be carried out by a charity to support the delivery of its charitable purposes.” (For a full analysis of what is permissible see Trustee guide to campaigning and influencing – what you need to know, NCVO 2010) http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/trusteeguidecampaigning

Campaigning and risk management

Campaigning and advocacy are sometimes seen as inherently more risky than service provision because they attract more publicity. Where campaigns rely on high public visibility the potential impact on the reputation of the charity and funder needs to be well managed.

While it is true that campaigns can attract more profile and occasionally controversy, generally the public are supportive of difficult issues being raised, especially in areas that are often neglected in public debate.

Transparency and good communications between the funder and grantee are important in managing risk in campaigning and grantees need to be clear about what methods of campaigning they are intending to deploy and discuss any controversial issues as they arise. Trusts can also look for organisations that have a good track record of managing public relationships with government and the media, but this is not always the same as staying out of controversy and speaking Truth to Power.

It is rarely trusts who come under attack when there is negative comment. It is important to anticipate potential criticism, be clear about the rationale for funding and ensure that the work is well evidenced and can be clearly conveyed, so it is less open to misrepresentation. It is crucial to ensure that the trust and grantee work closely together to ensure clear and consistent communication and that the trust’s expectations are met.

‘Historically there has been some nervousness about funding charity campaigning work. We would offer reassurance that there is much scope for funding charities’ campaigning activities as long as they are acting within the legal and regulatory framework; funding campaigning is an effective way that trusts and foundations can support charities in their work.’

Caroline Cooke, Charity Commission Head of Policy Engagement and Foresight

Supporting campaigning – a funders guide
Local Voices, Global Ban-the campaign to ban cluster munitions

The Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund (the Fund), has supported work on clearance, risk education, rehabilitation of survivors and campaigning on landmines and other explosive remnants of war. In 2003, the Fund helped to set up the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) of 200 civil society organisations seeking to ban cluster bombs.

The Local Voices, Global Ban (LVGB) initiative was conceived, in partnership with Landmine Action and the CMC, as a way of building civil society campaigning capacity to influence states to participate in the Oslo Process. LVGB provided small grants ($500 to $6,000) to grass roots campaigning organisations overseas, to ensure widespread governmental support for an international ban on cluster munitions. In addition to this overarching aim, assessment criteria included the following objectives:

• To secure a strong cluster munitions treaty by building campaign capacity in affected and strategically important countries
• To grow new campaigners in the global south

Small focused grants were made through LVGB supported campaigning activities with the aim of contributing to change at national levels; this was primarily intended to influence a change in government policy. In some cases, raising public awareness and shifting the opinions of the target audience were also achieved. One positive indicator of the scheme’s success has been both campaigners’ and the Fund’s flexibility and agility to respond to changes in their national and international policy environments.

Despite the small size of the average grant, the timeliness and appropriateness of the LVGB funding generated influential campaign activity. Many grantees pointed to their small grants being particularly useful in being available to invest in national campaigns at the time of influencing parliamentarians, decision makers and political processes, around the build up to the international Oslo process conferences, which where considering a ban. At the time of the evaluation into the campaign, 107 states had adopted a comprehensive treaty banning the production, transfer, use and stockpiling of all cluster munitions including many of the countries targeted by the campaign.

The campaign helped in giving many of the smaller organisations a high profile voice in the debate and put pressure on their own countries in way that might not otherwise have been possible. The credibility and profile of the Fund was also an asset in managing the public profile of the campaign.

‘Overall, the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund and partners have struck the right balance in relation to the extent of risk carried, and the level of public profile sought, in a project of this type.’

Local Voices, Global Ban evaluation, 2008

Ensuring beneficiary voice

Funders may be concerned about their legitimacy to enter the field of social change, rather than service provision as some feel that they do not have the mandate to act.

Ensuring the experiences and aspirations of beneficiaries are at the heart of a campaign can improve both legitimacy and impact.

Trusts can play a very powerful role in ensuring that policy and campaigns work is developed which reflects the experience of organisations in their service provision and through working with beneficiaries to allow them to address the underlying causes of the problems that service provision throws up. Funders that support organisations to help people have more of a voice, provide the research to underpin policy and reach out into communities are in a much better position to judge whether to support campaigning or service development projects in the future.

Campaigning and service provision often work better in harness. Recent research shows that organisations that both advocate and serve are more successful at tackling social issues than those with a focus on just one area.7 By setting up good feedback mechanisms as part of the projects they fund, trusts can ensure that they work with and not impose their views on those organisations and the beneficiaries they are working with.

Change is often long term, unpredictable and it is not always clear what the end results will be.

It is difficult to justify long term funding especially when the intended outcome is unclear.

Campaigning is not an exact science but then neither is service provision. The law of unintended consequences applies in both areas. Trusts and grantees should have a clear view of the intended outcomes for any area of endeavour and reasonable expectation that these will lead to the impact which the funder wishes to achieve. This can be a sophisticated mapping of the key concerns addressing a particular problem, worked up with policy analysts and service users which outlines a process of addressing an issue. But it could also be a much simpler understanding derived from existing work in an area.

The key point is to determine the overall issue being addressed. Once this is fixed it is easier to settle on a timeframe and necessary actions to achieve the desired end. Once this is done then there can be clarity about expectations within any given time-frame.

Good evaluation and reporting on impact is crucial to sustainable change.

Campaigning can be hard to evaluate. Change can be long term, attribution between inputs and impact can be difficult, especially in a field where much work is done in alliances.

Charities have increasingly focussed on evaluation, especially in campaigning, and funders are right to expect more clarity about the outcome of work they have funded. Charities which are able to demonstrate that their work is really leading to sustainable change are more likely to be able to satisfy funders, who can help this process by building in additional resources to allow this to take place.

Demonstrating impact can be easier than is often portrayed and need not be overly complex or unnecessarily distract from day-to-day campaigning activity. Once evaluation has taken place it is important that charities communicate what has been achieved. It is crucial to demonstrate impact in order to motivate supporters and funders alike. Many trusts rightly ask for outcomes to be communicated so that learning can be shared and organisations held accountable.

Success can be measured in simple and complex ways, both of which are correct.

‘My theory is that what you will end up capturing is that ‘we helped 72 blind babies gain sight,’ as opposed to ‘we found a metaling problem with children being born with eye diseases and we were able to figure out that it was related to some environmental toxin because they live in public housing projects that are contaminated by X, and then we were able to deal with the services and then advocate with the city to change the products they use.’

Foundation leader 8


What works?

Key lessons in supporting sustainable change
These are drawn from a number of evaluations and studies of successful campaigns including Leat, Atlantic Reports, Proscio, Lofgren et al.

Use all of the options available to you
There are a wide variety of tools and ways of campaigning and influencing. Campaign aims can range from changing legislation, policy and practice to raising awareness and public campaigning. You can explore with the grantee what options are being proposed to support the ends you want to achieve. It is often worth investing in analysis and research to underpin the change you are seeking, if this is not already available.

Invest in defining the problem and potential solutions
To be able to understand the dynamics of an issue it is important to have the best political intelligence and an understanding of what government and key players think. Most trusts do not want to take a lead role in setting strategy but may want a more in depth understanding of the environment they are trying to influence. Grantees views will be crucial to this, but it may not always be wise to rely solely on their analysis of future issues and trends. Trusts have often found it helpful to develop their own view of what creates change in an area they are funding. This can often be done collaboratively with those you are funding, where the funder and grantee jointly agree ways of bringing about change.

Supporting effective alliances and coalitions
Alliances and coalitions can provide a safe way for trusts to support strategic interventions by focusing on capacity building at a number of different levels from grassroots to national organisations. However, it is helpful to understand the environment in which you are working and while trusts may at times feel frustrated with apparent duplication not all issues are amenable to working in coalitions and sometimes the transaction costs of maintaining coalitions are greater than the benefits.

Co-ordinate funding partnerships to strengthen a campaign
Multiple funders advancing the same position will maximize effectiveness when working as part of an effectively co-ordinated effort. True Colors and Esmee Fairbairn co-ordinated their funding for separate elements of Every Disabled Child Matters but in doing so ensured even greater leverage.

Use your strength when necessary
Trusts can bring powerful additional expertise and influence to the table. It can be helpful to discuss with the grantee how best this can be deployed. Depending on the history and scope of the trust some may want to become much more actively engaged in the shaping of the public message when it can bring credibility, as with the cluster munitions ban campaign and the Diana Memorial Fund.

Support the infrastructure as well as the campaign
While the actual campaigning is the exciting part good campaigns don’t happen without logistical support and a solid infrastructure. It is important to help build the campaign capacity of the organisation not just support the campaign. The support provided to the Special Educational Consortium allowed it build capacity in the sector without which it would not have been able to achieve its goals.
As a consequence the consortium was able to work closely to influence ministers and parliamentarians to secure significant changes to education legislation and consequent guidance. The grant allowed the consortium to hold a number of policy forums with the wider sector enabling it to garner a much wider range of views than would have otherwise been possible and feed these into the parliamentary process. Ministers acknowledged the very positive role that the organisation had played in improving legislation and guidance. This way of working was so successful that the consortium then constituted itself as a standing body rather than coming into existence only when legislation was proposed. 9

**The Special Educational Consortium—supporting campaigning infrastructure**

The Special Education Consortium represents a wide range of organisations, from small parents groups to large VCOs, who develop common policy decisions and influence government to adopt these. It allows the voluntary and community sector as a whole to develop policy and keeps government better informed about key issues.

As the result of a positive evaluation from New Philanthropy Capital a funder provided a grant to support the capacity of the consortium to work full time on the development of policy over a crucial period when the government was making significant change to the education system.

**Invest for the long term**

Campaigns rarely fit into the one- or two-year funding periods. Long-term funding gives organisations the ability to plan more realistic strategies. Trusts that have had the confidence to fund for the long term have seen some remarkable rewards for their funding. True Colors’ sustained funding of Every Disabled Child Matters meant that the process could be put in place to work through the necessary policy and parliamentary stages and deliver lasting impact.

**Support the monitoring and evaluation of impact and promotion of results**

A significant amount of work has been done in recent years on evaluating campaigning impact and this can be incorporated simply into your work. Successful organisations are those who can develop clear goals and evaluate progress against these. Supporting organisations which do this gives a much better chance of having real impact. Once done it is vital to communicate to all stakeholders what success has been achieved and to be held accountable.

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9 Case study based on campaigning for Success. Jonathan Ellis. NCVO.
Campaigning has come of age and should be seen as an integral part of the way in which voluntary and community organisation achieve their mission. Campaigning is not at odds with service provision but its natural ally. Trusts and philanthropic organisations are routinely looking to develop a range of strategies to achieve their purposes, and campaigning can be a key component. For those looking to leverage their resources and achieve greater impact campaigning is one of the most effective ways of bringing about sustainable change.

When experts working in the sector were asked to name the greatest achievements of philanthropy it was campaigning achievements that featured most prominently: the abolition of the slave trade; suffrage for women; the banning of handguns and landmines; and civil partnerships. That both historical and contemporary campaigning outcomes should appear in this list suggests the transformational power of supporting campaigning.

Looking forward, trusts and philanthropic organisations have a major opportunity to shape the future direction and impact of the voluntary and community sector in delivering sustainable change across a wider range of social and environmental issues than ever before. This poses the question for all funders – what would you want your funding to achieve in the future that might match some of the historic achievements of the past?

Brian Lamb July 2010
About the author
Brian Lamb OBE has held director-level posts in campaigning and advocacy in both Scope and RNID. He has also been an active member of a number of government and ministerial working groups. He is chair of a national coalition on and led a national Independent Inquiry into Special Educational Needs. He has written widely on campaigning, evaluation and policy issues and is chair of the Campaign Effectiveness, NCVO advisory group. He is a founding board member of Every Disabled Child Matters Campaign and also lectures on campaigning and voluntary sector effectiveness.

About Campaigning Effectiveness, NCVO
Campaigning Effectiveness, NCVO supports and empowers people and organisations to change their world through campaigning and influencing policy. We bring together experience and expertise and drive excellence in campaigning and policy work across civil society by providing support, knowledge, tools and resources. For further information about our work go to www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/campaigningeffectiveness
This resource has been produced by Campaigning Effectiveness, NCVO as part of the campaigning and advocacy workstream funded by Capacitybuilders.