

Part C: Choosing your campaign tactics



Using tactics to activate your campaign

A good tactic has a clear purpose to help your campaign strategy. Time-limited, they are a specific activity, with a specific outcome. When completed, it's worth measuring their impact.

Use a tactic to:

- raise awareness of your issue or concern at workplace level or more widely - regionally or nationally
- encourage people to undertake various actions, helping you identify supporters who will become activists, both now and in the future
- develop a list of supporters who can be contacted further down the campaign trail
- influence those with power to make change happen.

Deciding what you want to achieve

Do you want to get as many members and their colleagues engaged and active in your campaign? Raise awareness of the issue or problem? Let people know the campaign is up and running? Or seek out members who feel similarly?

Tactics should never deride or embarrass individuals within your workplace or community. Rather, they should highlight unsafe systems, ineffective policies, procedures, and other problems. Talk about the people who are impacted and how it affects them.

There are lots of great ideas for effective tactics to promote your campaign, gain support, and secure the changes needed. Here are some used by RCN representatives on different campaigns, with key points to consider.

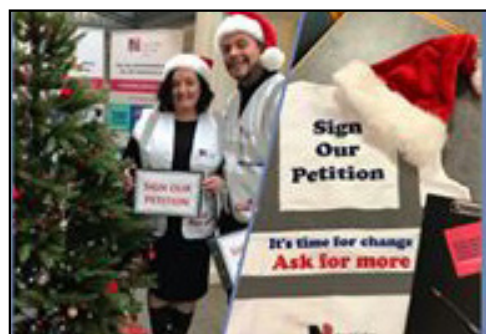
Petitions

These are easy and are very low cost. They can be online or paper. The RCN has expertise to develop either. But first, decide what you want to achieve. Are you lobbying the government for legislative change? Or are you trying to gain backing for car parking spaces for staff at your workplace?

Never underestimate a petition's impact. You may have heard negative responses along the lines of: 'what's a petition going to do?', 'no one in charge is going to change anything because a few people signed a bit of paper!'

But petitions can:

- raise awareness of the issue in UK Parliament. The UK Parliament petitions website (e-petitions) allows members of the public to create and support petitions and once you achieve 10,000 signatures, the government must respond. At 100,000 signatures, it will be considered by the Petitions Committee for debate in parliament. See www.gov.uk and search 'petitions'
- formalise your 'ask' and make a statement about your issue
- engage people in a conversation about the issue, finding out what they think and feel. Through conversations, you can see who will make good activists - someone willing to take action to help the campaign
- develop your activist base. Asking people to support a petition is a form of 'fast action, low level activism'. People can sign it quickly, feeling good about contributing to the cause
- enable those who sign to ask their family, friends and colleagues to follow suit. This is 'easy action; next level activism'. By talking to their contacts, they are starting to develop arguments around the cause, while listening helps them form their own response. Petitions have an end product. It's satisfying to count the number of signatures you have obtained, feeding back to the co-ordinators
- help you collectivise. By forming a list of names of those who agree with you, you are 'collectivising'. Ask people if you can contact them to talk further about the issue. Will they come to a meeting, a demonstration, take some badges to distribute or write to their MP? In other words, you can ask them to take on a 'tactic'
- be spread across any sites, workplace or community. Ask anyone to sign your petition - from RCN members to other colleagues, managers and your employers. On some occasions, it's acceptable to ask patients or residents, alongside their carers and family members. You can start to form a real picture of the various sections of the wider community who can support your campaign
- form the basis for getting media attention, for example ask your elected government representative to present your petition to parliament.



Stickers and badges

Quick and easy to produce, these are a very low-cost tactic. Most people are happy to wear a sticker or a badge. Children in particular - with permission from their parents/carers - like a sticker, so it's great to draw in family and community support. Badges can be a way for people to show their support too.

Have you seen the RCN's sticker campaign highlighting the need for nursing staff to take have a break during their shift? Designed to be presented by nursing staff to their colleagues when they have taken their break, this tactic uses fun to highlight a serious issue. Stickers draw attention to the campaign, both for the nursing workforce and the public. They start conversations, fundamental in any campaign, eventually breaking down the culture of not taking breaks.



Postcards

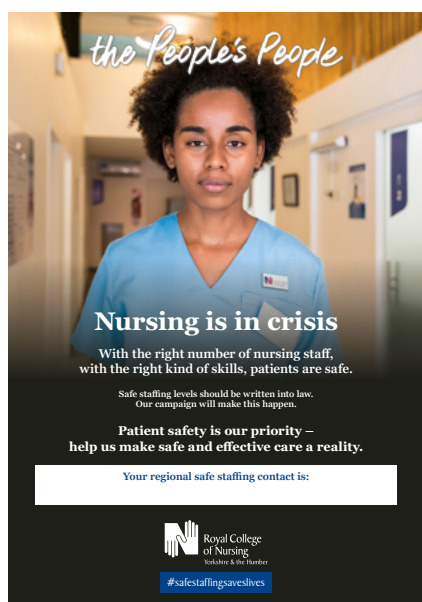
Easy to produce, postcards help you get a lot of information to your audience and are often used for a specific task. For example, they can be designed for people to send to their elected government representative, asking them to raise the issue at government level. They can also be used to lobby councils, parliament, and those with the power to make change.

For postcards to elected representatives, consider a 'double postcard campaign' – in other words, two postcards, separated by perforations, and both freepost. One side is sent to the elected representative, with the other sent back to the regional/national office. Individuals can find their local elected representatives on line, entering their home postcode. This helps you keep track of who sends postcards and to whom.

Campaign incentives

Merchandise is a great way of attracting people to your campaign, alongside promoting the RCN and your message. Easy-to-transport items, such as pens, badges and keyrings, are always popular and cheap to purchase with added RCN branding. Other items, such as reusable water bottles and mugs, are more expensive, but offer excellent branding opportunities for longer-term use. When deciding what to use, consider the environmental impact, choosing items people will use, not throw away.

Posters



Workplaces are ideal for poster campaigns, as they have noticeboards for trade unions. Access the [Portal for Online Design \(POD\)](#) system or for bespoke posters, design your own, with support from your regional or national RCN communications team. Keep them simple in terms of both content and visuals - garish colours detract from the message. Backs of toilets doors are great places to put posters.

Being visible

To effect change locally, be visible to your audience. Walk the wards, sharing your message. Have information to hand and your call to action in mind.

Ballot boxes

If visiting different locations is difficult, think about ballot boxes to gather responses on a specific campaign issue, or collect staff ideas about the issues that matter to them.



Emails

Use emails as a campaign tactic, asking supporters to email their elected representative or whoever has the power to change things. Provide them with a template email, outlining concerns and how the issue can be addressed. Invite supporters to personalise the email, adding in their own experiences. For help, talk to your regional or national RCN communications team.

Using the media

For campaigns needing public support, media attention can help spread the word. But be aware that using the media always carries the risk that you, or your message, is not represented quite as you would wish.

Be mindful of your employer's policy on media activity, which may restrict you speaking out. Seek advice from your regional or national communications team before contacting the media or agreeing to an interview. Effective lower level ways to use the media include calling in to a radio station, adding your voice to a discussion on an issue linked to your campaign, and writing to your local news outlet.

Rallies and marches

A rally is a gathering of supporters in a public space. There will be a number of speakers and it will often be preceded by a march along a set route on public roads. Rallies and marches are excellent ways of achieving public attention for an issue, creating opportunities to garner support from other agencies and individuals. They are also likely to attract media attention and you can use this to share your message.

To be successful, you need to be confident you can attract high numbers of participants. Such events also take a good deal of organisation, including seeking permissions from the police, council or any private landowner before going ahead. You also need to carry out a risk assessment and get third party liability insurance. Promotion of the event is key to ensure support. You should notify the press about the event, ensuring you have people available for interview. Seek advice and support from your regional or national teams from the outset.



Vigils

Vigils attract attention to your campaign, often working as a silent demonstration. They need to take place in high profile settings. Organise with a set group of people who are guaranteed to attend, designating a few participants who can quietly explain the purpose of the vigil to the media or passers-by. Hand out leaflets and collect signatures for a petition.

For a candlelit vigil, use candles in transparent jars to protect the flame against the wind. You can ask each participant to bring one, or centrally organise a few dozen large candles, placing them around the assembly.

You need to seek permission from the landowner and may also find it useful to get advice from your local RCN office.

Speeches and statements

Speeches, oral statements and formal declarations can be made at the start or end of rallies, marches and conferences. Distribute copies of a written version to any relevant stakeholders. Your regional or national communications teams can help with these, if you are speaking in your RCN role.

Stunts

Unlike rallies and marches, stunts don't need many participants but can draw equal media and public attention to your cause. They are generally short, timely events with either the media invited, or photography and filming shared on social media. Examples are flash-mobs and street theatre. Apart from gaining permission from any landowner, this type of activity is relatively free of red tape.

Social media

Social media is a highly effective way of connecting with people, wherever they are based. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has produced a [useful guide](#) to help you to use social media safely and effectively.

Be prepared to speak personally and from the heart. Individual stories are much more likely to be shared than anything corporate or polished. Include visuals, preferably a picture. Employ a range of tones in your messages - a stream of angry rants will cause people to turn off. Include personal stories, facts and, where applicable, something light-hearted to keep people reading. Seek advice from your regional or national communications teams.

**I am only one: but still I am one.
I cannot do everything: But still
I can do something.
And because I cannot do
everything, I will not refuse to
do the something that I can do.**

Helen Keller