

Getting heard, making change

A campaigning resource for RCN representatives



If you've got nurses in your revolution, you know at least you've got a shot.

Becky Bond & Zack Exley, *Rules for Revolutionaries: How Big Organizing can Change Everything* (2016), Chelsea Green

As an RCN representative, campaigning is a key part of your role. But what does it involve? And how can you support members to do it well?

To help answer your key questions, we've worked with RCN representatives, members and staff to pool our experiences and expertise. The end result is this new and timely resource, which aims to help you support members to become the most effective campaigners they can be.

This booklet is part of a wider resource pack for use by all RCN representatives, wherever you're based. Accompanying it is a fold-out poster and some downloadable guidance. This includes checklists and templates to support you, as you work with members on your chosen campaign. All of the items can be found by logging onto: rcn.org.uk/repscampaing

We know that the nursing workforce can be a powerful force for change. Our hope is that this resource will help you harness that strength, for the benefit of our members, their colleagues and the people they care for.

Paul Brown, Chair of UK Learning Representatives' Committee

Denise McLaughlin, Chair of UK Safety Representatives' Committee

Graham Revie, Chair of UK Stewards' Committee



What is campaigning?

If you've ever bought Fairtrade coffee, taken part in something like the ice bucket challenge or signed a petition, you're a campaigner. Campaigning is about finding your voice, raising awareness and trying to achieve change that makes things better, tackling issues that really matter to members, wherever they are.

It's also a vital function of trade unions. As an organisation, working with our members, the RCN has been campaigning for more than a century. We've been protecting and securing better and safer working environments, improving terms and conditions, achieving better pay and ensuring access to learning. As the voice of nursing, we have also campaigned for improved service provision for all.

Every RCN member has the potential to become an active campaigner. If something is important to you, invariably you're able to speak confidently about it. Many of you have examples where you've spoken out - including threats to services affecting your loved ones or your communities.

Members are experts in their own experience, so are perfectly equipped to give voice to issues affecting them and the people they care for. As an RCN representative, your role is to discover what really concerns members, signposting them to evidence or national campaigns to help them make the best case. At times, you'll be advocating on their behalf but more importantly, you'll be helping them to find their own voice - and be heard.



What does campaigning look like?

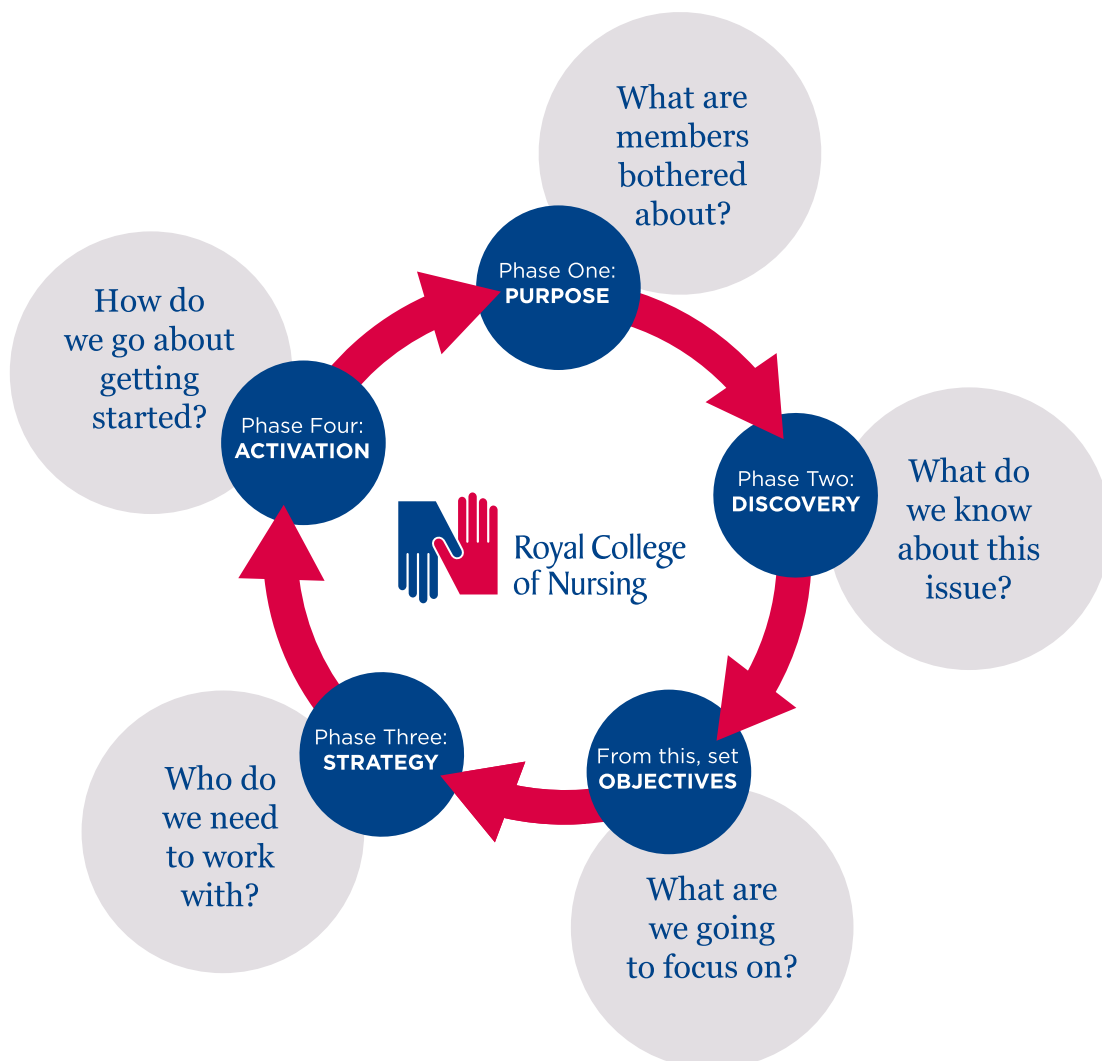
Campaigning activity may be specific and local, focusing on an issue impacting a group of members and their colleagues, for example, car parking or rest areas. It may also be much more wide-ranging, such as national campaigns about rest and rehydration, or staffing for safe and effective care.

Each campaign will look different, depending on the issue being tackled. At its core, a campaign should bring members together as a group, gaining and giving support to achieve your campaign objectives. As a representative, your role is to empower and energise them to take action for change, sometimes working with other colleagues.

Drawing on the campaign planning cycle below, we've developed a framework of eight questions. For each phase of the campaign planning cycle, key questions help build your campaign with members - and other interested parties - taking it to activation.

The key to every campaign is involving members in activities based on the values and issues they care most about.

Figure 1: The RCN Campaign Planning Cycle



Phase One: Purpose – what are members bothered about?

Q1. What change do members want to see?

For any campaign to gain traction, it must be widely supported and understood, focusing on an issue your members have identified themselves.

Start by identifying what matters to them. This is at the heart of any campaigning activity and means you need to be connected to local members, understanding their concerns.

Spending time raising your profile and connecting with members is essential. Invest time in building relationships. Have conversations about their lived experience, what they feel strongly about, the kinds of changes they would like, and their willingness to campaign to achieve them. This is the bread and butter of the representative campaigning role in the workplace.

For detailed guidance on how to connect with members, identifying potential campaign issues, see **Part A** of this resource pack: **Identifying and building the case for your campaign.**

This is available at rcn.org.uk/repscampaigning



Phase Two: Discovery – what do we know about this issue?

Q2. What are the underlying causes of the problem and what needs to change?

Once you have identified those issues that matter most to members, you need to work with them to identify which could potentially become a campaign. To achieve success, campaigns should be built upon clear, winnable goals. Identify what success looks like and be able to make a coherent case for your proposals.

As an RCN representative, you can play an important role in gathering evidence to support members' campaigning activities. For instance, you may have access to pertinent data from workplace meetings you attend, including papers shared at partnership forums (or their equivalent) and various workplace committees.

If you're a safety representative, you can formally request data to inform a particular campaign issue. Other sources are publicly available, including your employer's annual staff survey results. All this knowledge helps members feel confident in formulating their key campaign messages.

Anecdotal evidence is also valuable. If your members are saying something is bothering them, get them to record what is happening and build their own evidence. Remember the RCN's *Ask, Listen, Act* resource. This identifies crucial questions and sources of information that could help to build the members' case.

Q3. Which of these can we influence as members?

Campaigns can only be successful if they're actively supported by members. From the outset, involve members in developing the case for change. As campaign aims emerge, keep assessing the extent to which members are prepared to act. Check their level of commitment and energy for the work ahead and any special talents or abilities they can bring.

Where an issue has an impact beyond nursing staff, you may also be able to harness the support of other parts of the workforce and other unions. Remember, the broader your base, the more winnable the campaign. Other aspects of your role may include encouraging staff to recognise a problem, influencing your peers and raising awareness locally through trade union and branch networks.

Q4. Is this issue part of a wider problem?

In practice, the issue raised by your members could be affecting many other groups. As an RCN representative, you're the person who can foster those links. Develop connections with your branch, representative network and RCN office. Identify opportunities to build a wider campaign, or even link into an existing one.

For some ideas on how to build the case for your campaign, see **Part A** of this resource pack: **Identifying and building the case for your campaign**. This is available at rcn.org.uk/repscampaigning



Set objectives - what are we going to focus on?

Remember the SMART formula - Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely*

Phase Three: Strategy - who do we need to work with?

Q5. Who do we need to convince?

Once you move into the strategy phase, begin by thinking about your campaign's key target audiences.

Campaign activities can be shared across a team of active members, RCN representatives and RCN staff. When you're thinking about who needs to be influenced locally, consider stories that could help to strengthen your case. Sometimes key decision makers can be very far removed from the real life of those working on the front line. Stories from members about their experiences can help to bring your your case to life.

Working behind the scenes, you may be able to smooth the way for members to access key local decision makers, helping them to prepare their influencing strategy.

For more detail on how to identify key targets, see **Part B** of this resource pack: **Developing your campaign strategy**.

This is available at rcn.org.uk/repscampaigning

Q6. How do we influence key decision makers?

Once you've formulated your campaign's aims and objectives, identify those activities to help you achieve change. You may find the social change model in **Figure 2** opposite helpful. It looks at four specific areas where campaigning activity may take place. Think about what your contribution, as an RCN representative, might be in each quadrant.

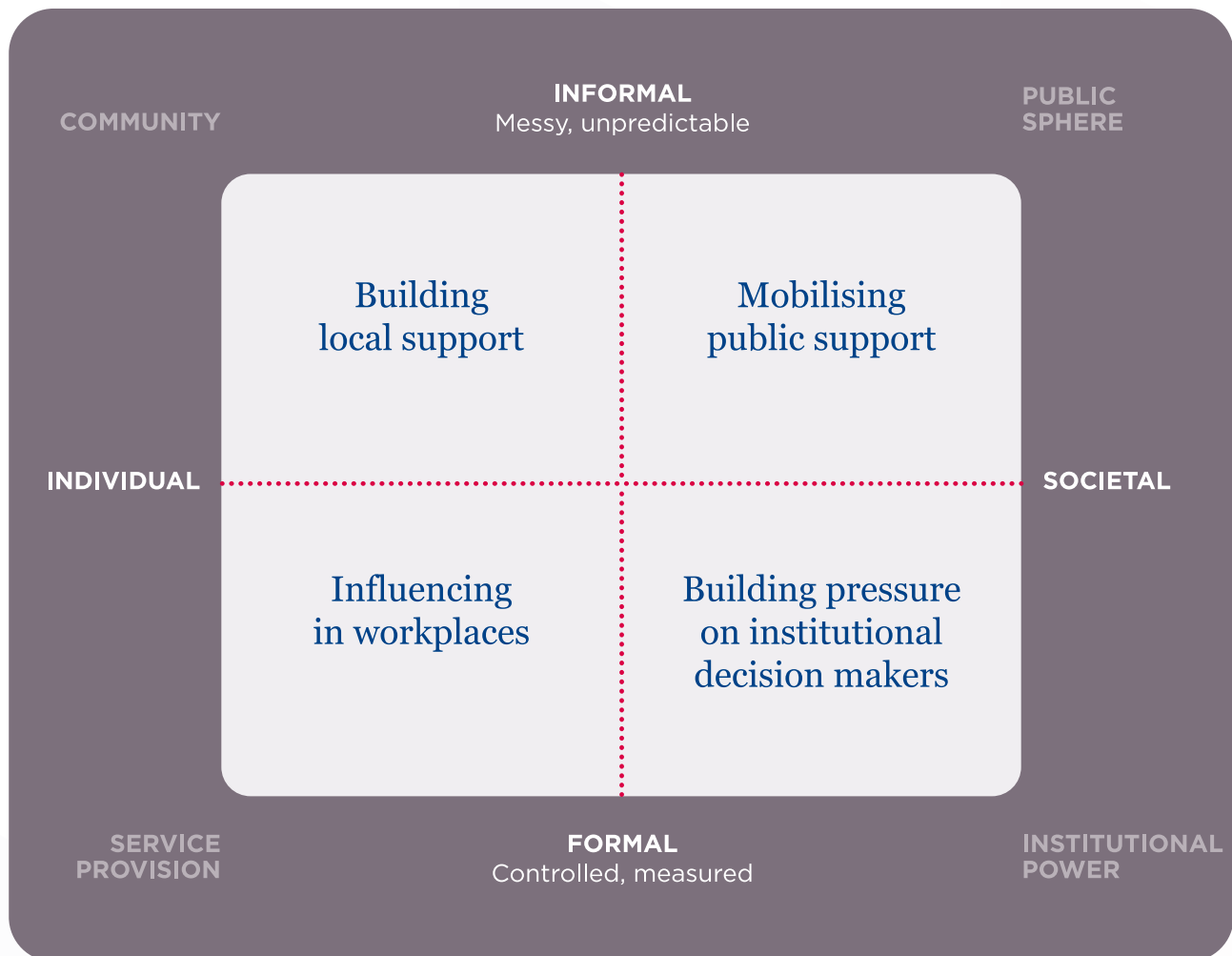
Depending on your issue, you may need to consider how you support members to campaign in the 'service provision' quadrant (or your workplace); or how you take an issue to the local community (top left); the wider public sphere (top right); or even to parliament or government itself (bottom right).

As an RCN representative, the actions you take will vary, depending on where the campaign is focused, and which decision makers are being targeted. For example: you may be campaigning for a local workplace policy to be changed; working with members on a stand at a community event to raise awareness of a broader campaign; or travelling with members who are speaking to elected government representatives, as part of a nationwide campaign calling for new legislation.

For ideas on what campaigning activity in each of the four quadrants looks like, see **Part B** of this resource pack: **Developing your campaign strategy** (see above).

* Harvey, D. Smart Goals. Available at projectsmart.co.uk/smart-goals.php
Accessed 28 November 2019

Figure 2: The Social Change grid*



Q7. Who else can help us?

Think about who else can help to build momentum. Already you'll have identified key internal target audiences who you must convince. Now you need to think about who can support you to get your messages across. Depending on your campaign, these may include:

- internal allies – for instance your Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS), and staff-side/other trade union colleagues
- RCN allies – for example local and regional branches, regional offices, public affairs team, and nursing and employment relations department colleagues
- local groups – for instance Healthwatch, local charities/special interest groups
- national or even global partners – such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council, Health and Safety Executive, national charities, pressure groups, and media channels
- individuals or groups with a strong social media presence – for example celebrities, national influencers, campaigners or politicians.

* The Sheila McKechnie Foundation (2018) *The Social Power Report*.

Available at: <https://smk.org.uk/social-power-report/> Accessed 20 September 2019

Phase Four: Activation – how do we go about getting started?

Q8. Do members have an appetite and capacity for this campaign?

Now it's time to put your plan into action. Depending on your issue, what this looks like will vary hugely. For example your campaign may be based within your workplace and involve meetings and conversations with senior management. You may be adding your voices to a national campaign that potentially impacts the whole nursing community.

While resources may be available from your regional office or central RCN, don't underestimate the power of locally developed visuals and messaging. Harnessing the energy, creativity and commitment of local members is vital. If they've been involved from the beginning, you have a much better chance of achieving their support for the campaign's practical implementation.

As part of your planning, consider the following **10 tactics for turning information into activism***.

1. **Mobilise people** – bring them into the action, working together collectively.
2. **Witness and record** – let it be known that someone is watching.
3. **Visualise your message** – make your campaign visible.
4. **Amplify personal stories** – think about how members can safely share their own stories.
5. **Add humour** – where appropriate, prompting a smile can help capture people's attention.
6. **Manage your contacts** – understand and map your connections.
7. **Use data where possible** – amplify and illustrate your message.
8. **Use collective intelligence** – work with other interested parties to pool your intelligence and build your influence.
9. **Encourage people to ask questions** – remember you're supporting others to campaign, you don't have to do it all yourself. Members need to be involved and empowered.
10. **Investigate and expose** – you may have access to information that can be safely or anonymously made public, in support of your campaign.

For more ideas on campaign tactics, see **Part C** of this resource pack: **Choosing your campaign tactics**. This is available at rcn.org.uk/repscampaigning

*Developed from *Tactical Technology Collective: 10 tactics for turning information into activism*. Available at: <https://archive.informationactivism.org/>
Accessed 2 September 2019





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