

Part A:

Identifying and building the case for your campaign



1. Raising your profile and connecting with members

1.1 Raising your profile

It's important that members and other staff know who you are, what you do and how you can work with them to achieve positive changes.

You represent all members - not just those who work immediately around you. Where you have negotiated facilities time, use some of it to make contact with as many members as you can, making yourself available. Visit different workplaces, introduce yourself and make sure everyone knows how to contact you.

Use your noticeboard to promote yourself, ensuring your contact details are clearly visible and adding a photograph so members recognise you. Facilities arrangements should cover time both for union duties and access to resources, such as noticeboards. Don't forget that as an RCN representative you have access to the new [Portal for Online Design \(POD\)](#) system where you will find template posters to help you communicate with members.

Ask your HR department to include your contact details on the intranet. Use social media to boost your profile with members. Your regional/national communications manager will help you use the POD system and offer advice on using social media safely and effectively. Contact them through your local office.



Build your relationship with team leaders, managers and their teams. Respect their authority and their professional responsibility by ensuring your workplace visits aren't disruptive. Attend meetings on behalf of members, ensuring you provide feedback. As an RCN representative you have access to formal workplace structures and processes such as partnership forums, local negotiation and consultation processes. These activities sit alongside campaigning. Each provides opportunities to build pressure and collective support around members' issues, as well as the possibility of formally raising concerns with senior management and key decision makers.

For more guidance on working collectively with other unions see the RCN publication [Working Together: Being active on staff side](#)



Working Together



**Being active
on staff side**

1. 2 Mapping RCN members

To connect with members and potential members you need to know where they are. This mapping work is essential to support your campaigning activities.

The RCN membership data

The RCN holds extensive information on our members and as an RCN representative you can access it to help you plan your local activity.¹

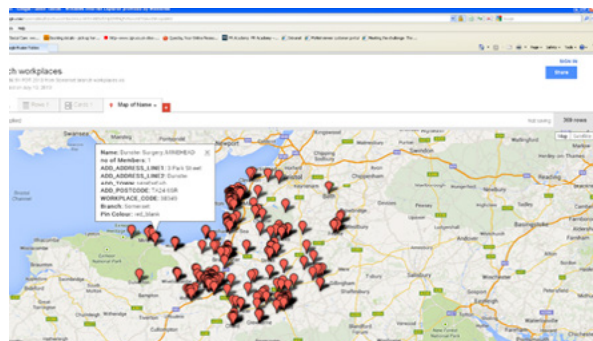
The membership data team can tell you how many members you have in your branch or working for your employer; where they are based or where they live; and your memberships demographic, for example, their ages. They can also provide interactive maps (Figure 1).

These are especially useful for mapping employers with multiple workplaces, and for branches to see where their members are.

Your local knowledge is also important to the database team, as you can highlight any inaccuracies, for example, old workplace addresses or out-of-date employer names. Please feed back anything you notice. Discuss your needs with your regional/national communications manager, who can order data reports.

Please note that the RCN strictly uphold the principles of good data management in compliance with GDPR legislation and all RCN representatives must comply with [RCN processes and procedures](#) for holding member data.

Figure 1 – screenshot of interactive map showing members for Somerset branch



¹ This is not individual member contact information but general information that can help you build a picture.

Other data

To put your RCN membership into context, source additional local information about the workforce. Work out your potential membership by finding out how many nurses and health care support workers are employed. This helps focus your activity appropriately.

Don't underestimate your knowledge about where you live and work. Add to your understanding through contact with your local branch and membership. Map your workplace – the services, facilities, staff and specialities. This is your starting point to plan your workplace campaigning activity. For example:

- Employer's name
- Services provided
- Number of sites
- Staff total
- Number of registered nurses and other nursing roles
- Number of health care support workers
- RCN members - by category, including students and retired members
- Any current issues affecting local members.

1.3 Connecting with members

Reaching all the corners of your workplace is integral to raising your profile and promoting a positive view of the RCN. Trade union legislation protects your right to reasonably access your members, and you have freedom to move around your workplace - but do so sensitively. Regularly dropping in to say hello, be seen and deliver leaflets or posters is more effective than you might think. Representative roles should be both proactive and reactive, so connecting with members to check what may be bothering them is as important as responding to specific members' concerns. Find out what members are talking about where you work.

Your aim is for staff to recognise you as the RCN and know how to contact you. Building relationships helps you ask for more, when you need it. For example, during specific campaigns, whether local or national, you'll need more access to members. If you have good relationships and are well known, you'll be able to secure better access to groups of staff, gaining valuable feedback and ensuring they're fully informed.

One-to-one conversations

Engage with members in one-to-one conversations to find out what matters to them, what worries them about the future, what they want to improve, and how they are prepared to become actively involved. Use the guidance in [Appendix 1](#) to help start these conversations, or you may prefer your own approach.

Regardless of how you structure your one-to-one conversations, it's important to listen carefully, show an interest in what the other person says, ask questions and don't interrupt. If members raise an issue, remember to find out their ideas about what might happen to address the issue. You may be able to engage members to help with smaller tasks to lighten your load. One-to-one conversations are a good opportunity to identify more engaged members who want to become more active.



Listening events

Organise a formal drop-in event for members to share what matters, what they want to change and how they want to take action. [Appendix 2](#) has tips about holding a listening event, but you may have other ideas on how to structure your own.

More formal events also provide a good opportunity to identify local members with leadership potential – those who are listened to and bring others along with them. They are important allies in campaigning activities, whether in the workplace or beyond.

Learning events

Holding an event with a learning component is a great way of bringing both members and potential members together in the workplace, providing you with opportunities to chat and gain a sense of issues that are important. Badging something as a learning event can also be a good way of negotiating a workplace space for bringing members together. For bigger events, consider linking with other workplace reps and your branch. Again, watch out for those members who have a real passion about an issue. As a follow-up, approach them to arrange a one-to-one conversation.



Emailing your members

Whilst email should never be used as a catch-all method of communication, it's an important and highly effective tool. Although the RCN membership database doesn't hold email addresses for all members, it does allow direct communication with a large proportion. Data can be selected by geographical area – for instance, all members in Lothian; by employer - all members working at Virgin Healthcare; by membership group - all retired members; and a combination of all these categories - all health care assistants working at the Royal Cornwall NHS Trust who live in Truro and are aged 25 – 40.

The RCN protects members' data, and those using it, with a secure email system. This ensures that communications are managed without data protection breaches. The system also enables us to carefully monitor email traffic, evaluating each sent email to ensure we're approaching members in the best way, encouraging them to read and act on messages.

As an RCN representative, email your members by speaking to your regional/national communications manager. They will discuss your needs, order the data, help you write the content, and arrange for the email to be built with corporate styling and sent at the agreed time. Afterwards they will provide associated data, including how many people it was sent to; how many opened it; and how many clicked through to any linked information.

Surveying a specific group of members about an issue related to a local or national campaign can be a useful way of gathering anonymous data to help you develop your plans.

A checklist of ideas and suggested activities is available at www.rcn.org.uk/repscampaing to help you to plan your next steps.

**We realise the importance of
our voices only when we are
silenced.**

Malala Yousafzai

2. Building the case for your campaign

Once you have identified those issues that matter to members, you need to work with them to identify which has the potential to become a campaign. You'll need evidence of the current situation and a measure of what would need to change, if the campaign were to be successful.

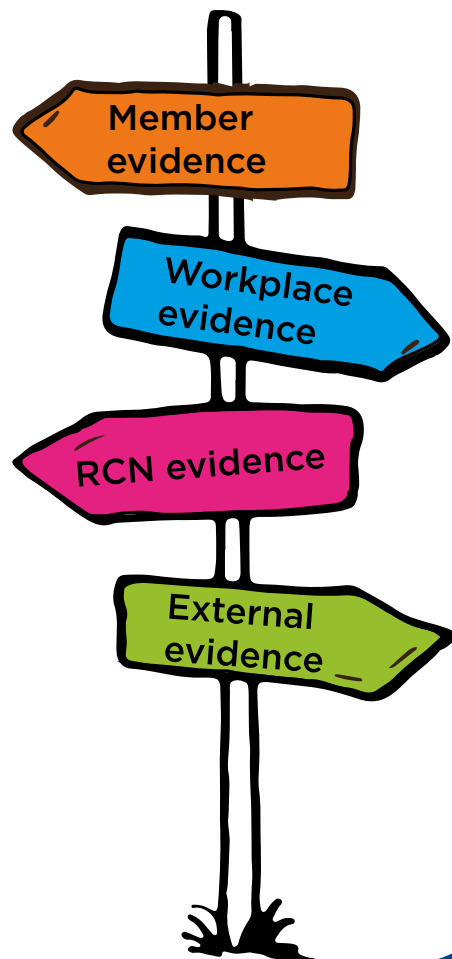
As a rep, you play an important role in helping members gather evidence to help them take forward potential local or national campaign issues. As you build the case together, you need to think about the influence that members can exert and the extent to which they are prepared to act, in support of emerging campaign aims.

Remember you are the link connecting local members to the wider membership community and the work of the RCN. The issue members have raised may affect many others working elsewhere. Find out what existing campaigns are being promoted by the RCN by checking the [RCN Campaigns webpages](#) on the RCN website.

The RCN also produces an extensive range of publications and guidance documents, from professional issues to the complexities of employment relations. Most are available in hard copy via RCN Direct and all are available to download on [publications page](#) of the RCN website.

Other organisations, such as charities and local health campaigning groups, may have useful evidence or campaigns you can draw upon to support your activity. As an RCN representative, you can signpost members to various resources, helping them build an evidence-based approach. If there is no existing evidence, consider requesting your employer's permission for a staff survey. 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.

Use the checklist of ideas and suggested activities available at www.rcn.org.uk/repscampaigning to help you to plan how you will build the case to support your member-led campaign.



Appendix 1:

Having a one-to-one conversation



A one-to-one meeting is:

- a meeting between two people
- held in a public place (or where both parties feel safe and comfortable) to initiate or cultivate a public conversation
- no longer than 30 minutes (the time it takes for a cup of tea to go cold)
- intentional and relational
- always held face-to-face.

A one-to-one meeting is not:

- a sales pitch
- a whinge or moan
- a gossip.

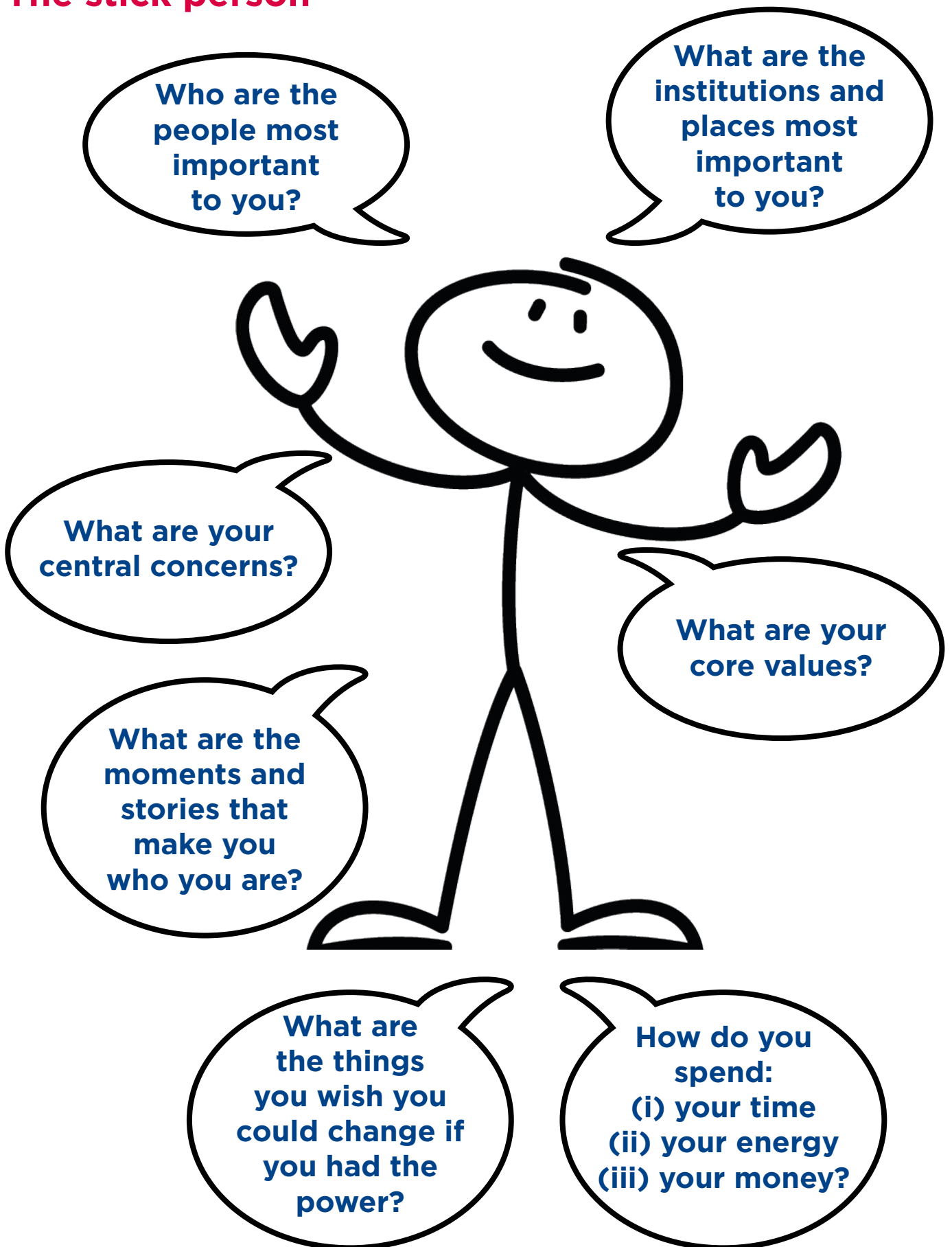
Underpinning a one-to-one conversation is the principle that people are always worth listening to and sharing yourself with. Setting up a one-to-one, asking people what they think about their workplace or community, telling them how you see things, and learning from each other is an act of recognition. You are saying to that person “you have value, ideas, dreams, insights that are worth listening to, and so do I”. This is known as building common ground. Community organisers use the term “self-interest”.

Prepare for a one-to-one meeting

Think about yourself and what is your self-interest regarding the workplace. Draw a stick person and add the following themes: passion; ambition; important people; time, energy, money; and turning points/key moments.

Now put what matters to you under each heading. This can be personal or professional – but nothing too personal. You may wish to share an insight from your community/personal life. Use your own self-interest as a starting point to build common ground, by talking and listening to the other person. Engaging with members and non-members in one-to-one conversations helps you to find out what matters to them, what they want to improve and how they might be prepared to get involved.

The stick person



Appendix 2:

Tips on holding a listening event



Holding a listening event

Listening events bring together people you have built relationships with, through one-to-ones and small group meetings. Their purpose is for the whole group to identify what matters to people – in other words, where pressures lie - and what they are prepared to campaign for.

Prepare for a listening event

Ideally, the meeting should be held in a private space, for instance, a larger meeting room, where interruptions are unlikely. The room should be set out informally, so people feel comfortable and can chat easily. As a rep, your facilities agreement should confirm your right to hold a workplace meeting.

Approach your workplace facilities/estates team to book a room if appropriate. It is worth thinking about whether it might be useful to meet with your Director of Nursing/Nursing Lead to explain what you want to do and why. Also consider working with your staff-side colleagues to get their support. You could also meet with your Freedom to Speak Up Guardian if you think the issues that are likely to come up might be ones that are of interest to them.

Liaise with your regional office and get their support if you are struggling to get your employer's agreement.

If the event is held as part of a branch meeting, it can be helpful to ask people to sit together by employer or sector.

Have a go...

- If a number of group discussions are being held, it's helpful to have a nominated facilitator for each group, who can also capture discussions. You can also give out simple forms for people to complete.
- Create a safe space in the group by agreeing confidentiality, only one person speaking at a time, respecting different views etc.
- At the outset, the group facilitator asks "what is putting pressure on you right now?" contextualised to the issue that is being discussed.
- Go around the group and invite everyone to answer in turn.
- Then open the discussion, theming the issues as the conversation develops. Think about breaking the issue into manageable actions, what is winnable, and what might not be appropriate to take forward.
- At the end of the session, each group agrees their actions. If appropriate, this can be voted on by the wider group.
- After thanking everyone for attending, make clear what the next steps are likely to be.