

VALUABLE, ACCOUNTABLE, ESSENTIAL -
stop the ~~Cuts~~ in local services!

CAMPAIGN PACK



CAMPAIGNING AGAINST CUTS

1. A basic guide

As part of the overall campaign to revitalise and defend public services, this is a useful guide to the essentials of campaigning. We will want to issue advice and help at different times along the way, and review our approach, so below are a few basic tips. We want this to be of help to both experienced campaigners and new activists.

This guide is in no way a final word – as with any campaigning there should be room for everyone to contribute ideas.

We need Aims and Targets

- **Aims** are the focus for any campaign, around which everything else is built.
- **Targets** are the people we need to convince. Who can deliver the decisions we want?
- Aims & targets make it possible to review the campaign. Are we achieving what we set out to achieve? Is the material we produce reaching the targets? Make sure that everyone knows the issues around this campaign and the line of march.

Involve the members

- Encourage member activity in support of this campaign. We need to focus on things that impact on members, and concern them. This means they will identify with the campaign and support activity. The campaign can also have the added benefit of building organisation within the branch and raising the profile of UNISON.
- This means asking your members what issues they want tackled and assessing what are key. There are many ways of doing this – surveys of members can be useful in this and for publicity purposes.
- One likely issue that is likely to increase in importance, is the impact of leaving vacancies unfilled on the staff that are left. Get the likely problems from the staff involved.
- Use the attached pro-forma (paper 3) to assess campaign issues.

Planning is essential

- Creating a flexible plan with a timetable and with responsibilities identified means you have a strategy. Everyone is aware of the intended progress of the campaign and can prepare for events. It also means you know when specific materials are needed, and can identify shortfalls in resources.
- Make sure you draw up a document, listing key dates, proposed activities, resources and responsibilities. For example, are there certain meetings of your council your branch might want to attend or lobby? Is there a local event that could provide a useful 'hook' for your campaign?

Who does the planning?

It is up to the branch activists and committee to agree, but it may be easier to form a smaller group draw up the plan. They could then take it to the rest of the branch for discussion and agreement. A small group allows flexibility to meet as and when necessary. The group can continue to meet as events progress, adapting the plan or co-opting others as and when necessary. They can also review each phase as it happens and report back to the rest of the branch.

Of course this may not be appropriate for your particular branch. Or you may wish to work branches within your area. Choose whatever suits everyone best. Some branches agree to free up specific individuals in these situations, sharing out their work so they have more time to concentrate on the campaign.



CAMPAIGNING AGAINST CUTS -

2. Getting your message across

It is important to think about who your target audience is and what you want to communicate. Communications may be 'internal' ie within UNISON (either the branch, Scotland, or at UK level) or 'external' ie outside UNISON (eg the employers, local or national media, trades councils, other trade unions, etc), or a combination.

You may want to think about using some of the following methods:

- Press releases, to tell the media about specific events in your campaign or a compelling story in your branch. Don't forget that journalists are interested in anything that will make a story, Think, what does it mean to their readers/listeners? Personalise your story.
- Briefing meetings for activists and members. Only when you have something to say, or you want feedback from them. What about a guest speaker?
- Could you create any photo opportunities to attract the attention of the press and public but also to provide your branch with stock photographs to be used in your publicity?
- Newsletters

Other ideas:

Circulars, email, notice boards, word of mouth, workplace meetings, pre-printed envelopes, social events, posters, leaflets, advertising.

What do you want to communicate?

Think about:

- The aims of your campaign
- Back up information which can fill gaps
- Key dates in the campaign timetable
- Who is responsible for what
- How the campaign aids recruitment and retention
- Messages of support from outside the branch
- Appeals for financial support

Importance of recruitment

No UNISON campaign can neglect the importance of recruitment and retention of members. Running a well-planned and high profile campaign in itself demonstrates that UNISON is worth joining. UNISON campaigns should show members that their concerns are being addressed and hence retention. Recruitment opportunities need to be identified in your planning and also picked up as they arise.

See our recruitment page for more information

www.unison.org.uk/communicating/recruitment.asp

Evaluation

The importance of reviewing cannot be overstressed. There's no point reinventing the wheel, so ensure that you learn from yours and other's experiences. At every stage your plan needs to be looked at and the activities reviewed. We can all learn from successes and mistakes. Think about how might review activities. For example, did you run a stall but nobody turned up? Where did you site it? When was it staffed?

And don't forget that successes need to be shared with others. Don't assume that you were the last to think of an idea. Report it to the Branch, the Local Government Committee and the Communications and Campaigns Committee. And don't forget to tell *Scotland in UNISON* the magazine for activists, and the UNISONScotland website – webmanager@unison-edinburgh.org.uk



CAMPAIGNING AGAINST CUTS -

3. Assessing your campaign

Identify your specific campaign and check against the checklist below. Use the table below.

CAMPAIGN Issue:	Issue matches? <i>score out of 10</i>	Can we address any problems?
Have a good chance of success		
Be widely felt		
Be deeply felt		
Be an issue which can involve members and recruit potential members		
Be worth the effort and time it will take		
Be easily understood		
Be consistent with union's values and objectives		

Checklist for a Good Campaign Issue

A good campaign issue should match as many as possible of these points:

1. Have a good chance of success

The problem must not be so large and insurmountable that there will be no successes to report at the end of the campaign.

2. Be widely felt

The issue must be relevant to the great majority of members and potential members and there must be widespread agreement about the solution proposed.

3. Be deeply felt

The issue must be something that people feel very strongly about.

4. Be an issue which can involve members and potential members

Members and potential members should feel that they and not outsiders have won the campaign.

5. Be worth the effort

Members should feel it is an issue that is worth their time and effort. If the issue is not so important but requires enormous time and commitment it might not be worth the effort.

6. Be easily understood

The issue can be expressed simply, so that it can convince members and potential members

7. Be consistent with UNISON's values, priorities and strategic plans

The issue must be consistent with UNISON's values and reflect our priorities and plans.



CAMPAIGNING AGAINST CUTS -

4. Reading a council budget

Every year councils must publish an audited statement of their accounts to allow the public to examine how they both raise and spend their money. The annual accounts are usually published alongside the Council's annual report.

These documents can be obtained either direct from each council or from their websites. If you are looking online for the annual accounts then try checking any section on council finance if it is not immediately obvious where the accounts are published.

There are two key elements within the annual accounts;- the capital and revenue budgets. In general terms, the capital budget deals with finances going towards the construction of new assets (such as new buildings etc) while the revenue budget is mainly concerned with the day to day costs of providing services (such as staff wages etc).

As well as publishing the annual accounts of previous years, councils often publish budgets for future years, providing information on council spending priorities for the year(s) ahead. Branches can find future planned totals for all councils until 2001 on the government website <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/18209/200811Settlement>. This is another useful source of information relating to how much of their income councils intend to spend and whether or not their reserves remain intact. The Accounts Commission advises councils that they should hold 2% of reserves although there is no specific accounting rule that this should be the case.

However, while most of a council's budget is committed to providing existing services, examining the accounts and budgets may highlight potential sources of funding which could be used to address cuts in other areas, or any short term, one-off spending such as funding equal pay.

Of immediate value in a cuts campaign is the paper on the budget that goes to the council budget setting meeting. This should of course have been the subject of prior consultation with the trade unions, but practice varies between councils.

That paper should identify not only the Scottish Government financial allocation but also any anticipated fall in income (charges, land sales etc.). It should also identify unavoidable commitments (exceptional cost increases, employer pension contributions, new statutory requirements, equal pay etc.) that in effect raise the base line budget before other priorities are considered.

In some councils that paper may only cover the high level figures (broad departmental allocations) and branches may need to ask for more detail on how each department plans to make cuts. That is where the detailed impact on members is likely to be found.

Each council presents its accounts in a different way. While some may have the levels of reserves indicated in a review of their finance at the beginning of their accounts, you may need to examine the whole document to find the level of reserves held. The main sections to check for this information are the Consolidated Revenue Account and the Statement of Movement in Reserves.

Even if there is a significant level of reserves held it is not simply an indication that a council has extra spending power available. Often such reserves are held back for a specific or earmarked issue and thus could not be easily realised for any other item.

Councils could also use some capital receipts as a one off source of revenue to fund additional spending, so it is worth checking the capital budget for any potential underspends.

Branches should therefore look carefully at the last published accounts and the draft budgets for the coming year – in particular the balances and how they are allocated, income levels, under-spends and the expenditure options being considered by the council.



**CAMPAIGNING AGAINST CUTS -
5. Draft Press release - Budget**

_____ UNISON warns of service cuts as _____
Council sets its budget

Embargo:[date/time that you do not want this to be published/broadcast before] **Date:**[of issue]

UNISON, the union that represents staff working for _____ Council warned that the proposed budget cuts would lead to cuts in much-valued local services.

The union says that despite protestations from the council, staffing cuts will inevitably mean services to the public will be lost. They say budgets are under pressure for three reasons:

- 1) Money from the Scottish Government has been ring-fenced to pay for the council tax freeze
- 2) The budget deal with the Tories to cut business rates will mean less money
- 3) Income from sales and service charges is dropping due to the recession.

And that this is happening at a time when demand for public services is increasing due to that same recession

_____ Branch _____ for UNISON _____ said:

[Pick one or two relevant quotes from the list below, or use a specific local service cut.

“Leaving vacancies unfilled is not a soft option. It means cuts in services. Local services are already under pressure. That pressure is increasing as people turn to public services to help them cope with the recession.

“Less staff means more cuts. Increased pressure on services mean less service, longer waiting times, and increased risk of corner-cutting and mistakes.

“The difference between cuts in ‘Backroom’ and ‘Frontline’ staff is artificial. Cuts in admin staff mean more admin work piled onto ‘frontline’ staff, and less direct service to the public.

“Equal pay is being used as a scapegoat. It is the law that men and women should be treated equally. Councils and Government have known they needed to deliver this for at least ten years.”]

If you can use a specific example for any of these, especially one that shows the impact on service delivery – do so.

S/he went on to say that the union was starting a campaign to promote local services and to ensure they were available for the increasing number of people who were likely to depend on them.

ENDS

For further information please contact:

[one or, better, two Branch Contacts with out-of-hours contact details (mobiles are good).]

