AMPLIFY

Local campaigning in a digital world

Sophie Hostick-Boakye
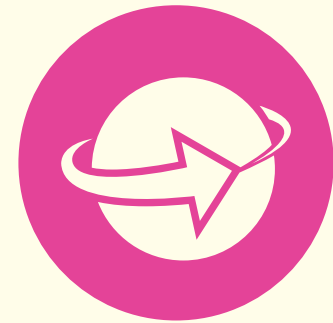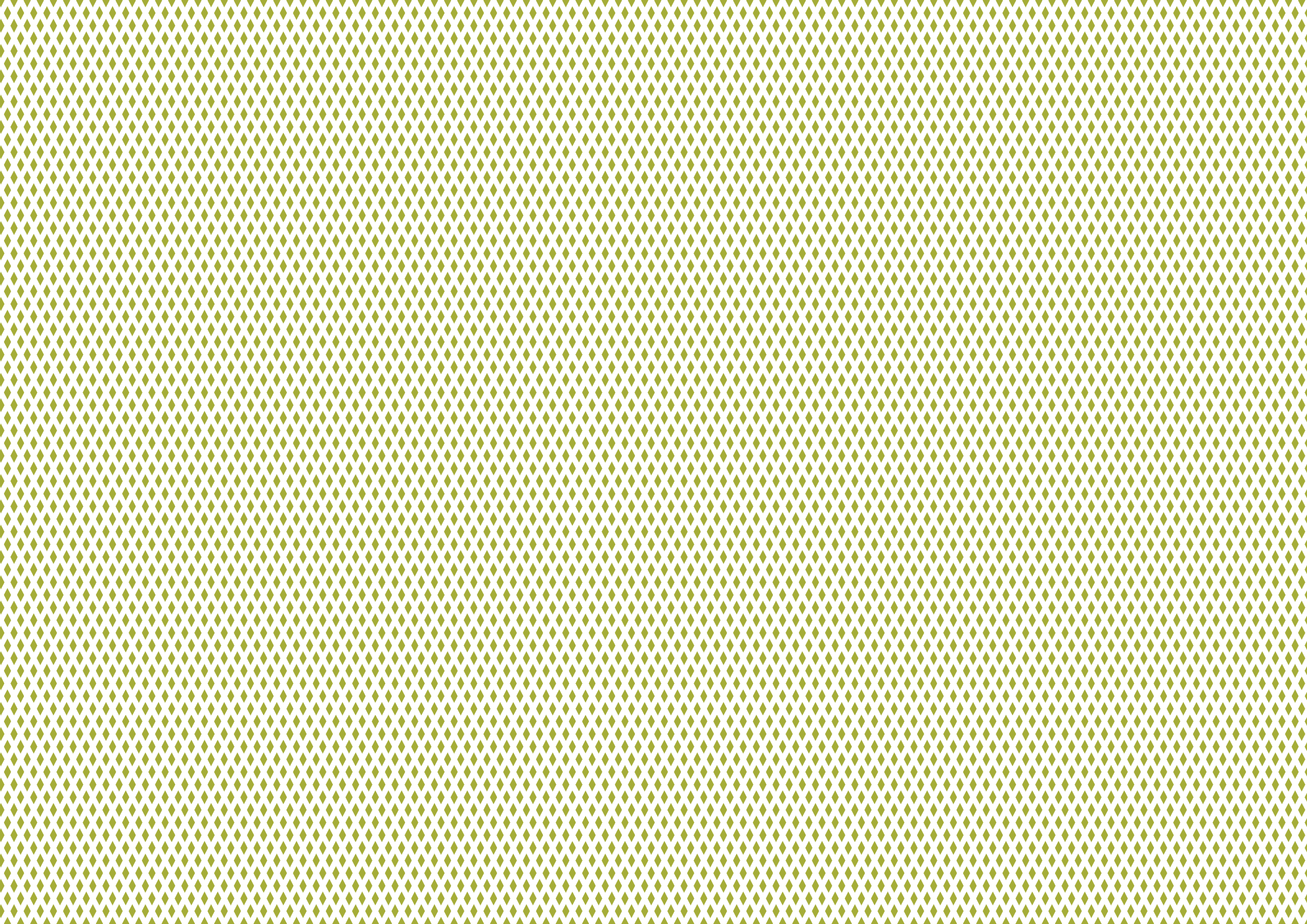
"Our presence online made connections for us that we wouldn't have otherwise made"

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ABOUT THE YOUNG FOUNDATION

We are The Young Foundation and we are determined to make positive social change happen. We pioneered the field of social innovation with The Open University, UpRising and Studio Schools. We work closely with individuals, communities and partners building relationships to ensure that our thinking does something, our actions matter and the changes we make together will continue to grow.

youngfoundation.org

ABOUT BIG LOTTERY FUND

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) is responsible for distributing 40 per cent of all funds raised for good causes (about 11 pence of every pound spent on a Lottery ticket) by the National Lottery. This totals around £600 million each year.

Since June 2004 BIG has awarded over £6bn to projects supporting health, education, environment and charitable purposes. Around 80 to 90 per cent of BIG's funding is awarded to voluntary and community sector organisations.

BIG delivers funding throughout the UK, mostly through programmes tailored specifically to the needs of communities in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland as well as some programmes that cover the whole UK.

BIG also distributes non-Lottery funding on behalf of public bodies such as the Department for Education and the Office for Civil Society.

BIG is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Cabinet Office.

biglotteryfund.org.uk

ABOUT BUILDING LOCAL ACTIVISM

Building Local Activism was a Big Lottery Fund-supported programme that aimed to uncover how communities can empower themselves through community organising, asset-based community development and digital activism. The programme ran from April 2011 to March 2013 and was split into two strands of work: Scaling Proven Models and Digital Activism.

FURTHER READING

Local 2.0: How Digital Technology empowers local communities (2012): In this report we bring together the insight from our work in three local authority areas of England testing different tools and methods to learn more about the role that social media and other digital technology plays in connecting and supporting people in low- and middle-income neighbourhoods.

Listen, Participate, Transform: A social media framework for local government (2010): This think-piece, the second in a series from The Young Foundation's Local 2.0 project, provides local authorities with a simple, practical framework to base their social media activity on.

Joining the conversation: An introduction to hyperlocal media (2009): This paper provides an overview of hyperlocal uses of the internet and how they can be useful to local government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Sophie Hostick-Boakye is an Associate at The Young Foundation.
Sophie works on a range of projects within the Resilient Communities and Housing team, aiming to understand people's every day lives and the potential to transform and bring about positive social change.

Since joining The Young Foundation in 2008, Sophie has been involved in research and action on a range of projects working with local authorities and communities, including Supporting Local Social Enterprise and Tottenham Stop and Search.

Sophie has a BA (Hons) in Sociology and Social Anthropology from the University of Hull.

INTRODUCTION

For people to be able to bring positive change to their own communities they need to be able to work together and to have a voice. In the past, the menu of options for doing this might have included lobbying civic leaders, traditional written petitions, marches, demonstrations and sit-ins.

With internet access on the increase and the proliferation of smart phones and social networking in recent years, much of this action has moved online. We increasingly see people taking action online to bring about change in two ways – either by pushing organisations and governments to make change, or by working together with others to raise awareness and make change themselves.

We do not have to look far to see how web and social networking tools are playing a role in all types of campaigns and propelling them to new places. Overall, they allow a lot of people to take part in civic action quickly and easily. The internet spans nationalities and backgrounds, interests and experiences, races and faiths, sexes and ages. It helps people have a voice and join together with others who feel the same as they do.

Perhaps for this reason, many online campaigns focus on national issues, like recent campaigns against NHS reforms or the Tell My Story campaign. Others are international, like the campaign calling for the Indian government to change the law relating to rape or Amnesty International's End FGM campaign. These campaigns use the internet to get people to sign petitions, share messages with their networks or email MPs.

Yet some campaigns use the internet to spur action locally, such as Save Our Setts in an East Yorkshire Market Town or the Elephant Amenity Network in South London. These campaigns often aim to spur people on to taking part in offline activities; online actions are minimal.

Our Digital Activism project was developed as a response to the apparently low number of campaigns focusing on issues in a local area that worked with and galvanised people online. Between April 2011 and March 2013 The Young Foundation was funded by the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) to work with six small organisations or individuals that wanted to use digital tools to campaign on issues that mattered to them. We supported them to develop and run web-based campaigns using free or low-cost web tools. The aim was to learn more about the role social networking sites and other digital technology can play in the campaigns of individuals and small community organisations.

Some campaigns had a clear geographical focus and target audience, such as Hackney CAB Crowdmap and Holloway Against Debt. Others focused more on specific issues and targeted anyone with similar experiences, feelings and beliefs, like Shelve It! and Mothers Against Gangs.

What all our campaigners had in common was the desire to energise, mobilise and involve local people in tackling local problems. They all had a passion to help their communities make a real difference for themselves and create change. And they all saw web tools as helping them to do this, despite having little or no experience of online campaigning. We supported them to build on their passion by providing them with coaching and training to help them feel comfortable and confident using web tools to campaign. We also helped them to develop and maintain a web presence, to carry out research and engage individuals in their campaigns – both to increase understanding of the issues and garner support.

This report distils what we have learned over two years. We bring together insights from our work, drawing on our practical experience with Hackney Citizens Advice Bureau, Holloway Neighbourhood Group, Leeds Older People's Forum, Mothers Against Gangs, Southwark Organising and Women's Networking Hub, and their respective campaigns.

First we introduce you to our campaigners, giving you a flavour of where they started in their campaigning journey and where they wanted to go. We then outline our learning – the things that went well and the things that didn't – gathered throughout the programme, and finally boil it down to some practical tips.

Ultimately the report is designed to inspire small community organisations or individuals to campaign on issues that matter to them using free and low-cost web tools.

MEET THE CAMPAIGNERS

KEY

Who set it up?

Group

Individual

Who is it aimed at?

Children

Adults

Elderly

Mix

Tools used

Facebook

Twitter

Website

Email

Blog

SMS

Talk

Computer Training

Mapping

ACTION PECKHAM

Who:
Ahmed Kabba
Where:
Southwark Organising, South East London
Why:
For local residents to collectively make Peckham
a better place to live
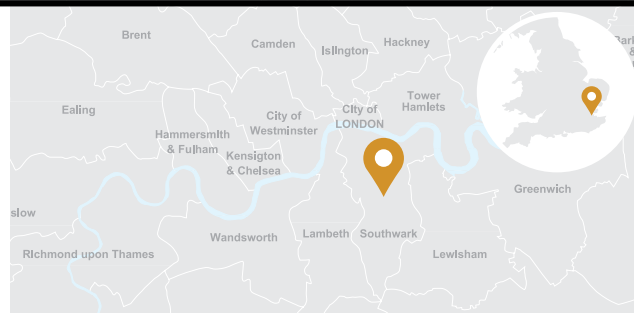
Ahmed is a dedicated and calm community organiser. He has been a community organiser for over a year and understands the importance of listening to his community and involving people in decisions.

He regularly meets people in local settings, pays attention to the changing landscape of Peckham and looks at ways he can help empower people to tackle problems.

Ahmed will knock on doors, hang out in supermarkets and libraries and go to neighbourhood meetings. But he knows he can't reach everyone that way. Not everyone answers their door, opens up to strangers or picks up leaflets. Most people do have an idea of what they like and dislike about their local area, though. They just need asking.

Ahmed thought internet and texting tools could help solve one part of the community engagement puzzle. But with little web experience, he lacked confidence. He wanted a website, but how could he make one? How might social media help further his aims? How could he text his community contacts without wasting hours on his mobile phone?

Through his **Action Peckham** campaign, Ahmed wanted to gather people's opinions on their local area, draw in volunteers and share information to help Peckham residents – initially on the Acorn Estate – improve their local area.

He set up a website sharing residents' concerns about the area, created a Facebook page to interact with other community organisers, and used text messaging to keep in touch with residents and complement his face-to-face approach of listening.

"[Action Peckham is] about community organising, engaging with the community, building up, raising issues through collective action working towards achieving local concerns."

HACKNEY CAB CROWDMAP

Who:
Catherine Dempsey
Where:
Social Policy team at Hackney
Citizens Advice Bureau, East London
Why:
To share stories on the impact of housing
benefit changes
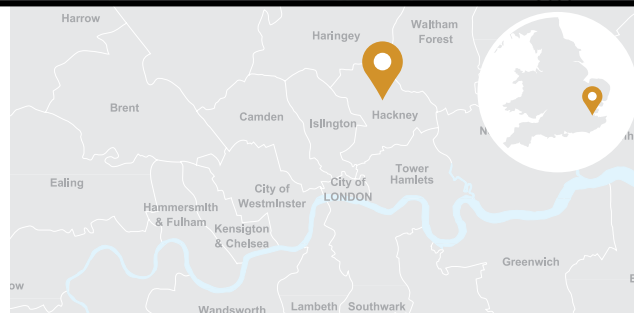
Catherine was a volunteer at Hackney Citizens Advice Bureau (Hackney CAB). With a paid job in research, Catherine gave over one day a week to voluntarily provide research support to her local CAB.

Catherine became aware of many social issues facing people in the area, most notably growing unemployment and household expenditure. With changes to housing benefit about to be implemented, Hackney CAB had started to think about how the changes could affect local people.

Catherine was an experienced web user, volunteering for an international organisation supporting communities around the world in crisis by using web tools. This helped give her ideas about how she could campaign on the impact of the housing benefit changes locally.

Catherine's aim was to map local stories. But she also wanted a website that would be able to contextualise the problems people were facing and reach decision makers. **Hackney CAB Crowdmap** was born.

Catherine developed a website to provide advice, research findings and impact stories. She worked with CAB Advisors and made links with other Hackney support organisations in order to raise awareness. She shared reports online, connected with CABs nationwide to gather support and, offline, spoke to Hackney residents. Using Facebook and Twitter, she shared campaign information, impact stories and research findings, reaching people she never thought possible.

> **"We knew that we would see lots of people through the door at the Bureau who would be affected by housing benefit changes. We wanted to find a way to make the impact felt by people more visible."**

HOLLOWAY AGAINST DEBT

Who:
Holloway Neighbourhood Group
Where:
Holloway, North London
Why:
To help local people understand debt and affordable borrowing and to raise awareness of the problem of debt in Holloway
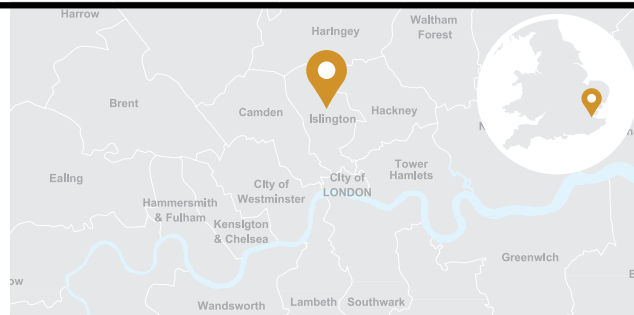
Holloway Neighbourhood Group (HNG) was born in the 1970s, when it campaigned for modern and safe housing and improved childcare. But campaigning had taken a back seat in recent years to focus on providing community services such as elders' groups and arts and crafts classes. The chief executive and trustees wanted to reignite some of the social action once plentiful in Holloway.

HNG is in a deprived area of London where there is clear evidence of neighbourhood decline, pressures on local facilities, a changing high street and impacts of poverty. However, HNG did not want to assume which issues concerned local people. It wanted to create a campaign that resonated with the community and garnered local support for practical action.

HNG did not have the capacity to have an impact on its own and knew that it faced the challenge of engaging local people through a range of methods. Because of this, HNG took to the streets to speak to local people about the issues they were worried about, finding that money and debt were big concerns in Holloway. **Holloway Against Debt** was created to capture these local stories and concerns.

Campaign webpages were added to the hyperlocal website Hollowaylife.net to signpost people to support and advice organisations, and encourage people to share their stories. Craft and money awareness workshops were organised to help local people save money. In addition, it became clear that creating local links to other campaigning organisations was important in addressing debt, and connections were made with community organisers and the local credit union to plan further campaigning activities.

> "[Holloway Against Debt is] interested in raising awareness around debt in Holloway, publicising people's experience of it and making people aware of alternatives to high interest moneylenders."

LEEDS: A CITY FOR ALL AGES

Who:
Older People in Leeds
Where:
Leeds Older People's Forum, Leeds
Why:
To make Leeds a welcoming and accessible place for older people
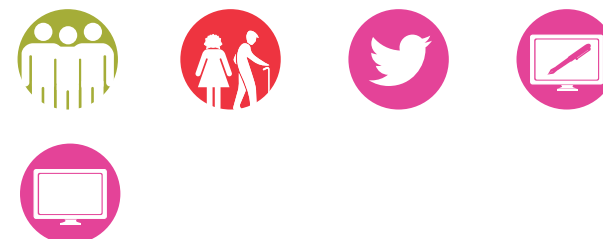
Leeds Older People's Forum is a small but successful membership organisation of over 100 voluntary organisations working with older people.

The Forum has almost 20 years' experience of working on older people's issues, from research and advocating for the needs of older people, to producing resource packs and providing support and training. The Forum was interested in how best to harness the power and voices of older people.

Rachel Cooper, Co-ordinator at the Forum, takes pride in supporting older people to be active citizens and recognised that one of the barriers to this was the unintentional limits placed on older people.

Older people were in the prime position to bring about a change to make Leeds a city for all ages. But in order to reach a wider audience, more older people needed to get involved in highlighting the barriers they faced. These older people would likely need support and encouragement to feel ready and able to campaign.

Adopting the slogan **Leeds: A City for All Ages**, Leeds Older People's Forum supported older people so they were able to use technology to capture their concerns and ideas. Digital workshops were set up to train older people to use film, blogs and social media. A blog was set up to share information on the campaign and a flashmob was held to kick off activities.

"We wanted to know what older people were saying were the important issues. The strongest issue was accessibility; not enough benches or toilets and not enough things to do like theatre and opera. This coincided with a strategic change in trying to get people more involved and a campaign was formed."

MOTHERS AGAINST GANGS

Who:
Harrow mothers and Harrow Police
Where:
Harrow, North West London
Why:
To empower parents to lead their children away from crime and gang culture
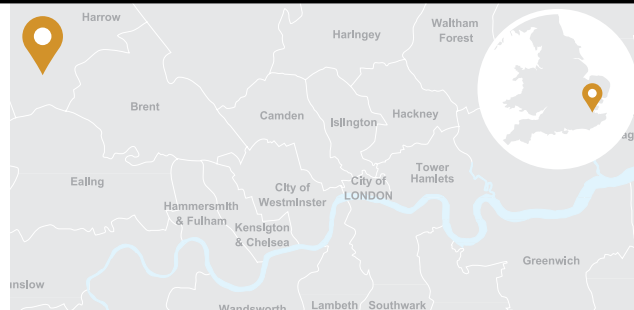
Harrow Police could see the devastating impact gangs were having on Harrow's young people, their families and the wider community. So could local mothers Ifra, Barbara, Hana, Zara and Vanessa. Their response was to develop **Mothers Against Gangs (MAG)**, a local support group for parents whose children are involved in gangs or at risk of gang involvement.

The mothers and police officers tapped into their personal networks to help MAG to spread their message. But what tools would MAG need and how could the group support people?

Through one of their networks, MAG was set up with accounts for a range of online tools including WordPress, Facebook, Twitter, Googlemail and YouTube. But the mothers didn't have the skills to use the tools themselves, so they were not updating them and no one was visiting them. While MAG was beginning to get known and was providing support by word of mouth, it was not yet reaching a broad audience.

MAG wanted to offer face-to-face and telephone support to parents worried about their children, provide information

on gangs, create partnerships and share updates. The mums wanted to own the project, broaden MAG's reach and so support more people.

MAG saw the importance in developing individual member's skills and their web presence. They developed, and thus owned, a central website to provide advice and information on MAG and the support they offer, and share updates on MAG's work.

> "During difficult times I would have dearly loved to have another mum who could relate to what I was going through. I believe through [MAG] us mothers will be able to support each other and get the help we need to keep our children out of trouble."

SHELVE IT!

Who:
Shahida Choudhry
Where:
Women's Networking Hub, Birmingham
Why:
To move lads' mags out of reach and view of children
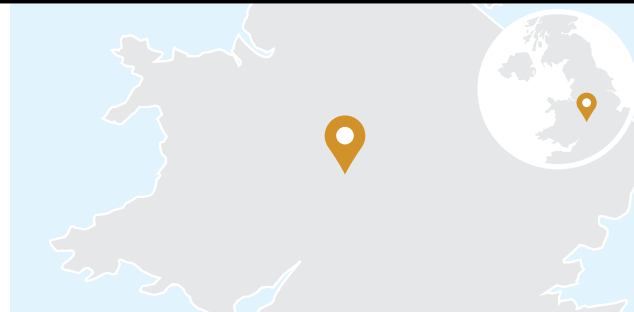
Having set up the Women's Networking Hub and building a network of 1,000 women, mostly in Birmingham but also from as far afield as Pakistan, Shahida knows how to engage with people.

She regularly hosts events, from local women's comedy nights to trips for feminist marches. With a job as a social worker and bringing up a family, Shahida connects with people on a range of women's issues, from arranged marriage to objectification of women.

The Hub had a passionate leader, profile, a large network of people with a common interest, a history of successful events and a dedicated website. What it did not have was much money, an online campaigning history or web development skills at its fingertips. Members were invited to events, but had never previously been asked what areas of concern they wanted to address and had not been called on to take action on something.

Shahida wanted to change the Hub's relationship with its members and engage them in developing a new campaign using the web. She asked her members *"what's your problem"*

and told them to send in ideas for what they wanted to campaign on with the Hub. Shelve It! was born.

Shelve It! called on individuals to rate their retailers' displays of lads mags and map them on the Porn Map. It asked people to share their stories about the impact of lads' mags and rate retailers online and used social networking sites to engage with people to gather reports, share stories and name and shame shops.

"We were concerned about the impact [of objectifying images] on girls' and young women's self-image and about how conforming to unhealthy and worrying stereotypes results in low self-worth and a lack of confidence. This is a huge issue that needs addressing promptly with direct action, lobbying and campaigning."

WHAT WE LEARNED

WHAT WE LEARNED

All of our campaigners poured tremendous amounts of energy into their campaigns, with successes and disappointments along the way. We believe that the insight from their experiences can help others who want to tackle issues and make improvements in their communities.

Together, we learned much about the technical aspects of online campaigning: how to set up blogs, incorporate sophisticated features and even write a line or two of programming code. But more importantly, we learned more about how local campaigners can use online tools to reach and mobilise new audiences.

Our campaigners all felt that online social networks would be the primary way their campaign could reach new audiences.

> **"Women have a lot of commitments and are expected to wear several hats: worker, mother, partner, friend, and daughter. This can restrict the level of involvement they can have in campaigning. But with the internet, you can campaign from home. We wanted women who hadn't done any campaigning even at a low level, to give them the tools to explore and be more involved even at a small local level."**
> **Shahida, Shelve It!**

> **"We thought we were taking a gamble because older people are not the primary users of social tools. But this could also be a strength, as that fact would mean if they did, it would grab a lot more attention... We were interested in the members having their own voice... Social media could add another platform, where their voice wouldn't be controlled by others."**
> **Rachel, Leeds: A City for All Ages**

As well as reaching a wider potential audience, the free or low-cost online tools were attractive.

> **"Our blog is accessible for people to contribute... You can use different methods, like videos and pictures. They complement each other and are engaging."**
> **Rachel, Leeds: A City for All Ages**

Finally, our campaigners soon realised that in order to reach larger audiences, they needed to collaborate. Many of them were passionate about issues that were already being raised at the national level and it made sense for campaigns to make connections.

> **"[It's important to] galvanise support from other organisations and similar campaigns [and] work with other groups as a collective."**
> **Shahida, Shelve It!**

Having explored the changes that all our campaigners made as they increased their ambitions, we have identified some common themes and key practical tips for others wanting to do the same.

1. **Decide who to engage and what you want them to do**
2. **Collaborate**
3. **Keep content accessible and up-to-date**
4. **Maintain momentum**
5. **Target influencers to amplify your message**

1. DECIDE WHO TO ENGAGE AND WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO

Most local campaigns will aim to connect with local communities to raise awareness, share advice or gather stories about the issue. But many campaigns will also want to connect to people who can influence the matter at hand, like politicians or journalists.

Social media is a powerful tool to reach a wide range of people but it is not always easy to get their attention or to predict which campaigns will work.

Not everyone is online, and some of those who want to learn about social media may nonetheless be uncomfortable with it, at least initially. Many older people involved in the **Leeds Older People's Forum** social media workshops were very anxious about using Facebook. Fears were voiced about privacy, anonymity and the rules around adding and deleting friends. Despite being shown how to change privacy settings and remove friends, suggesting they use aliases and showing the benefits of Facebook for the campaign, most of the older people remained steadfast in their opinions.

To reach those who were not online, campaigners had to combine online engagement with face-to-face engagement for some of the groups they were targeting. **Hackney CAB Crowdmap** set up a Facebook Page to engage with local people and a Twitter profile to reach influential

people. The campaign relied on impact stories from those affected by the housing benefit changes in Hackney. However, those most likely to be impacted by the issue were not easy to reach online.

Many of them did not have access to the internet, let alone to campaigns on social networking sites and, perhaps inevitably, failed to interact with the campaign online. To overcome this, the campaigners drew in CAB advisors to gather reports from people seeking support and advice on their benefits. These reports were passed on to campaigners to add to an online map.

Shelve It! set up a Twitter profile and Facebook Page to target a wide range of people and ask them to take part in different actions to encourage the more responsible display of lads' mags.

Twitter was used to ask people to rate how child-friendly the displays of lads' mags were in their local retailers and share their results with Shelve It! It was also used to let supporters know of new retailer ratings, often naming and shaming the retailers directly. Both Twitter and Facebook were used to ask people about their feelings on lads' mags.

Some time was taken to make sure that the activities supporters would be encouraged to take part in were quick, simple and attractive. Supporters were asked to '**check it, rate it, share it**!' – check and rate retailers' displays of lads' mags and share the results via the website, Facebook and Twitter. Instructions were given on the website and in a downloadable flyer.

Despite this guidance, supporters rarely followed the preferred route for rating retailers. Many people did not give retailers a rating themselves or add them to the Porn Map. Instead, most supporters got in touch via Twitter to pass on details and photos. This meant that campaigners had to work out the retailer rating, find the address of the retailer and add the rating to the Porn Map. With ratings of large chains and small independent retailers coming in from suburbs and towns further afield than the West Midlands, it could be quite time-consuming to locate the retailer and add the information to the Porn Map.

Claire Moore @cctheatreco 4 Dec
Hi @shelve_it Costcutter Lasswade road Dalkeith top shelf out of reach but not covered (get about a bit don't I?)
pic.twitter.com/sZLO2e9z

Shelve It! campaigners developed novel ways of engaging people through Facebook and Twitter. For example, instead of posing questions in the normal way, they asked people the following:

> **Shelve It! Birmingham**
> 21 January ·
>
> Fill in the blank:
> Lads' mags make me feel _____.
>
> Answers below!

The response was surprising. Within seconds one supporter had responded. The answers then steadily came in…

> Sick!!
> 21 January at 11:21 · Unlike · 👍 2
>
> Sick!!
> 21 January at 11:22 · Unlike · 👍 1
>
> Inadequate and an object
> 21 January at 11:23 · Unlike · 👍 1
>
> I once had an argument with a local shop keeper because he had newspapers with nude women on his serving counter and the broadsheets on a shelf at the back of the shop! His defence was "these sell the most" and in the mean time he helps in polluting and de–sensitizing the minds of little children!!!!!!
> 21 January at 11:24 · Unlike · 👍 1
>
> … Like females are constantly on display to be sexualised, objectified and criticized no matter what they look like
> 21 January at 11:24 · Unlike · 👍 1
>
> Inadequate! Undervalued! Like men think women are one dimensional
> 21 January at 11:28 · Unlike · 👍 1
>
> depressed
> 21 January at 11:33 · Unlike · 👍 1
>
> **Shelve it Birmingham** we are sexualised by society, then violated, abused, and made to feel responsible for it all... where is the justice in this??
> 21 January at 11:42 · Unlike · 👍 2
>
> … angry
> 21 January at 11:50 · Like
>
> Dirty and debased as a human being.
> 21 January at 13:06 · Unlike · 👍 1
>
> Nauseated
> 22 January at 10:08 · Unlike · 👍 1

Practical Tips

- **Think about who you want to engage.** It is important to use the social networking sites and web tools that people you want to engage with actually use. Think about if and how you might highlight a problem with the people who have the power to change things. Do you want and need members of the public to add information? How might they interact with you online?

- **Try different types of engagement via social networking sites.** Ask questions, encourage retweets, use new and existing hashtags, share results. But try to keep interactions short and sweet. Twitter is proof you can get a lot of information into a small space (140 characters), so try not to go overboard on Facebook updates.

- **Use Google Analytics or WordPress data.** Work out how people who are referred to your website via social networking sites interact with your website. These free analytical tools could help you tailor your social networking activities.

- **Make sure actions are clear.** Give people guidance for taking part if you can. But make sure you keep it simple. Think about the quickest and easiest ways people can take part.

- **Try a few ways to involve people.** If you are trying to reach people who can be hard to engage, like older people, you might need to reach out in a number of ways. Try getting people involved through existing contacts, but look at other interest groups that people could be part of. But remember, not everyone is a member of a group, so advertise widely.

- **Remember it's about engagement.** Do not just use the tools to broadcast news. Get people to interact with you.

- **Is there anything you can do offline?** Not everyone who wants to get involved or is involved will be online. So think about other ways to update and involve people, such as leafleting or getting stories in the local press.

2. COLLABORATE

Most of our campaigners focused on local issues, but realised that if they looked beyond their geographical areas they would find others who were tackling similar issues. By collaborating with others, campaigners could widen their reach, increase support and hopefully have a greater impact.

Shelve It! drew on its contacts to get ideas for the campaign and to get the message wider. The Women's Networking Hub looked to its members for ideas about what to campaign about and sent an email to members provocatively asking: *What's Your Problem?* Shahida said that people read the title *"and were worried that I was angry with them, which actually meant they were more likely to read it. It wasn't* just another email *from Shahida".*

Several members suggested focusing on lads' mags and this linked into wider agendas around the objectification of women and girls, and sexism. There were already campaigns focusing on ending page 3 (Turn Your Back On Page 3, No More Page 3), highlighting sexism (Hollaback, Everyday Sexism), fighting for equality (We Are Equals) and ending objectification (Object), among others. Although some addressed lads' mags, as yet no campaign had this as their sole focus.

Shelve It! started supporting many of these campaigns and others on Facebook and Twitter, signing petitions,

retweeting, and sharing updates. In return, many of these campaigns did the same for Shelve It! Sometimes Shelve It! asked others to share their updates, but very often other campaigners were willing to share information about Shelve It! without having to be asked.

Despite these links, at times support garnered through retweets and @mentions could feel superficial. On reflection, Shahida feels more could have been done through more collaboration:

> "I would like to bring other feminist campaigns such as Turn Your Back On Page 3 together under the banner of Shelve-It! They are doing similar stuff, and it would be better if we worked collectively."
> **Shahida, Shelve It!**

Hackney CAB Crowdmap was dealing with major changes to the country's welfare system, but was only focusing on the impact on residents in Hackney. Campaigners made links with organisations that provided support and services to people in Hackney specifically, raising their awareness of the issue but also asking them to gather reports and stories. They also reached out to the network of CABs across the country for support, many of which regularly retweeted the campaign.

> "We found that our presence online made connections for us that we wouldn't have otherwise made, both national organisations and policymakers and small voluntary organisations that were working on the same issues."
> **Catherine, Hackney CAB Crowdmap**

Leeds Older People's Forum is a membership organisation for voluntary sector organisations working with older people, which means it is well known in Leeds and already had a large network of organisations that it could draw on for support. Organisations and their members came together for the flashmob and employees were invited to write guest blog posts about their work for the Leeds Older People's Forum blog.

Beyond this, campaigners struggled to make links with other older people's organisations locally to get more older people involved in other campaigning and web activities, primarily due to time pressures and resources.

However, Leeds Older People's Forum made good use of its strong links to the council. The campaign arranged for two older people to get involved in the Leeds City Council Age Audit. These people were trained to take video footage for the audit, adding older people's voices directly to a process that might otherwise have only involved those representing older people, not the people themselves.

Practical Tips

- **Get people who can help you on board.** Make sure people who have offered to help know how to get involved and what impact they can make.
- **Think about how others could help.** Do you know people who might like to post guest blogs to your site? Could you have a dedicated website administrator who adds your content to the site for you? Is there someone in your network who has relevant expertise you can draw on?
- **Find out what other campaigns are out there.** You do not want to duplicate a campaign (unless the campaigns are specific to a geographic area), but you could tap into other campaigns and support each other.
- **Ask yourself if you can link into statutory agencies.** Think about whether there are any activities by statutory agencies, such as local residents' panels or age audits that you can get involved in. Do they need feedback from the community?

3. KEEP CONTENT ACCESSIBLE AND UP-TO-DATE

When creating their websites, our campaigners realised that it was important to avoid bombarding visitors with information, but instead to provide enough information to reach new people and garner support. Simplicity and functionality were very important to all and it became clear than when it comes to creating a campaign website, a little can go a long way.

For most, the websites started off basic with little information, and developed as the campaigns progressed.

Despite being enthusiastic about having and creating a campaign website, a big sticking point for all campaigners was finding the time to update their websites and share news.

While they were all dedicated to their campaigns, they could all have shared more news and updates with their supporters. Without updating their websites, supporters had few reasons to return, meaning support could easily wane. Twitter and Facebook undoubtedly seemed more attractive and were seen to provide much quicker ways to update supporters.

MAG's website evolved with the campaign. It started out as a basic blog with little branding and additional information, and developed into a more informative and organised space. But MAG was very keen to avoid anything overly flashy, corporate or confusing. They wanted a website that would help people feel comfortable asking for support without being overwhelmed.

MAG members found other campaign websites like Hackney CAB Crowdmap and Shelve It! too busy and were worried a similar style could put people off asking for support. They wanted a mostly static homepage with links to important blog posts or pages that gave people enough information up front without being overwhelming. Including pictures and basic information on the homepage helped make the MAG website accessible and friendly.

Unlike our other campaigners, **Holloway against Debt** decided against creating a stand alone website. Instead, the campaign was added to a newly developed 'hyper-local' site designed to be a local online hub for Holloway. However, the design of Hollowaylife.net meant that the Holloway Against Debt pages were fairly hidden away. As a result, the pages were difficult to find and inevitably lacked impact and reach.

Despite receiving intensive support and coaching to build his site, Ahmed at **Action Peckham** was terrified of editing or adding information when he did not have someone sitting next to him for support.

> "It takes a lot of time, especially when you are not sure how to use it... I'm afraid to go on WordPress in case I accidentally change something."
>
> **Ahmed, Action Peckham**

For many of the older people involved in **Leeds: A City for All Ages,** blogging felt like a self-promotion activity. Many thought that blogs had to be masterpieces, were worried that their writing skills were not up to scratch and were concerned they would be identifiable. There was also a widespread belief that no one would be interested in hearing what they had to say, so they thought blogging was a waste of time.

> "It's hard to get older people to write blogs, as they don't seem to see how it's different from a website (but they are steadily getting better). Older people are more readers than writers... They are more nervous about privacy issues and try to avoid adding personal information, [even though that would be] more likely to engage people."
>
> **Rachel, Leeds: A city for all ages**

To try to get around this, Rachel looked for help. Campaigners reached out to older people's service providers in Leeds to write guest blog posts. This removed the onus on the campaigners to find subjects to write about, or the time to write them, and allowed them to share the good work and experiences of others while providing readers with reasons to return to their blog.

Practical Tips

- **Think about what a website could add to your campaign.** How will it differ from your social networking activities?
- **Plan the content and navigation.** What information do you want to share on it? How can people use it? Do you want people to have their say?
- **Let your website evolve with you.** You can start basic and develop your website as your campaign develops.
- **Look to your contacts.** Is there a web development agency that could help you voluntarily? Is one of your friends internet savvy? Or do you know someone who likes learning new skills? Ask them for help.
- **Look online for help with web development.** There is plenty of information on the internet to help you. W3Schools is a great place to start.
- **Make a rota and plan for adding content to your website.** Plot activities coming up in a calendar and have people ready to write and add content to the website accordingly.

4. MAINTAIN MOMENTUM

Once people are involved in a campaign you need to give them a reason to stay committed. Our campaigners each had the will and dedication to work hard on their campaigns, which helped them push on at the outset. However, building on momentum as the campaigns progressed was something they tended to struggle with.

Leeds Older People's Forum and its partners could see the problems older people in Leeds faced and how it impacted on them. A group of older women at the Forum therefore suggested a flashmob *flashdance* to kick off the campaign.

So, in May more than 60 over-60s took over the Victoria Quarter in Leeds City Centre and danced to *We Like to Boogie*, twice. Afterwards, the older people were buzzing and looking forward to taking part in more campaigning activities.

But workload pressures and timescales got in the way. Additional campaigning activities did not start to take shape till some time later, by which time some of the momentum had been lost. The campaign struggled to get older people involved in filming, blogging workshops and events. This was partly due to the difficulties of working with partners to find older people interested in getting involved. However, when the campaigners did manage to engage people, they struggled to get their blog posts or videos online, either because of technical difficulties or because they could not get permission from those who were involved. This meant that often supporters could not see the results of their support, efforts and time.

Practical Tips
- **Set goals, objectives, milestones and timescales for your campaign.** What is your overall goal? What smaller objectives are going to help you reach that goal? Will a social media plan, strategy for specific web tools or plans for your activities help?
- **Be specific, realistic and look for satisfaction.** By having objectives with specific targets you can measure your success and help yourself and others understand the progress. But make sure they're not too difficult to reach, otherwise you and your supporters will feel discouraged if you don't achieve them.
- **Update your supporters.** Show what you are up to, how your supporters are helping and how the campaign is progressing. If people can see how they are helping they will probably stay involved. If you are not regularly updating your campaign your support will undoubtedly wane. Also thank your supporters for their input and be genuine.

"The flashmob generated a lot of energy that we didn't account for and we didn't really have a next step. I wish we had thought it out more."
Rachel, Leeds: A City for All Ages

5. TARGET INFLUENCERS TO AMPLIFY YOUR MESSAGE

One way of maintaining and building momentum is by sharing updates with supporters, your networks and influential people not already linked to the campaign.

Most of our campaigners developed influencing strategies to help them think about who they wanted to target and what the best ways of doing so might be. Strategies and action plans helped to keep the campaigns on track. It became clear that engaging with supporters requires frequent interactions. Therefore, many shared updates and celebrated achievements with supporters through their various social networking profiles.

Facebook proved particularly good at reaching individuals in a personal capacity, while Twitter had a wider reach, connecting to individuals in both personal and professional capacities, including politicians.

Hackney CAB Crowdmap followed the Twitter accounts of individuals, journalists, MPs, councillors, campaigners, CABs across the country, and large organisations. It gained a wide following and regularly updated them, sharing research findings, news stories, and achievements.

One campaign activity in particular – research into the availability of private rental properties in Hackney for people receiving housing benefit – was shared widely. The tweet sharing a link to the research findings was the most retweeted tweet from Hackney CAB Crowdmap and received @mentions from some high profile organisations, including Citizens Advice.

Darren Johnson AM
@DarrenJohnsonAM

Great site: Hackney Citizens Advice "crowd map" for people struggling with housing benefit changes bit.ly/N7zOKH

↩ Reply   ⇄ Retweet   ★ Favorite   ••• More

4 RETWEETS

10:34 AM - 20 Jun 12

This probably helped the campaign and research findings make their way to people Hackney CAB Crowdmap was not following or being followed by, including London Assembly Green Group Members Darren Johnson and Jenny Jones (who retweeted Darren Johnson's tweet on the campaign).

Tweets and retweets from the likes of Darren Johnson (3,000+ followers), Jenny Jones (8,000+ followers) and Citizens Advice (23,000+ followers) helped Hackney CAB Crowdmap reach potentially almost 35,000 people in a couple of days.

However, it didn't stop there. Darren Johnson's researcher contacted Hackney CAB Crowdmap to ask for more information on the campaign, including contacts and statistics to bring *"plenty of dry statistics and gloomy warnings… alive"*. Darren Johnson used the findings to put a question to the London Mayor Boris Johnson in July 2012.

Mayor answers to London
Homes to rent in Hackney

Question number	1920/2012
Meeting date	04/07/2012

Question by
Darren Johnson

Hackney Citizens Advice Bureau recently conducted a survey of the 1,585 properties that were available to let in their borough via Rightmove and Gumtree on the 15th June 2012. They found that only 143 of those homes were advertised at rents that fell below the Local Housing Allowance caps, and that only 14 of those were let by landlords who were willing to let to housing benefit recipients. Of the 1,090 properties with two or more bedrooms, suitable for families, only 36 were within the benefit caps and only 5 of those were let by landlords willing to accept benefit recipients. Will you urgently raise the findings of this startling snapshot with the Government and press for a rethink on the benefit caps in order to ensure that residents of Hackney receiving benefits due to low wages, retirement, bringing up children, sickness, disability, or unemployment are able to access a wider choice of properties in their borough?

Answer by Boris Johnson
It would be wrong to draw such conclusions from a single snapshot survey undertaken on one day in one borough and of just two advertising sites.

By sharing research, the campaign had its findings used by other people in power, large organisations like London Councils, and Consumer Focus, and journalists like the *Guardian*'s Editor of Social Affairs, Patrick Butler

News › Society › Patrick Butler's cuts blog
PATRICKBUTLER'S CUTSBLOG
Welfare cuts: housing benefit claimants not welcome here
Only a fraction of private rented homes in the London borough of Hackney are affordable under welfare reforms, and many landlords are actively refusing to let to housing benefit recipients

Of course, achievements can come sporadically so it is important to provide regular updates so supporters can see how a campaign they care about is progressing. **Shelve It!** regularly updated people when new stories had been shared and new retailers had been rated. It thanked people for their input and shared the results of activities supporters got involved in. For example, responses to a 'fill in the blank' question were retweeted or liked, an image composed of the responses was made and shared, and supporters were thanked for their input. This resulted in more interactions and more retweets, helping Shelve It! reach a wider audience.

Practical Tips

- **Think about how you can reach people in power.** Think about who you want to reach. By searching for particular people or organisations on Twitter you can easily engage with them to some level. But you will not find everyone that way, so think about other ways to reach them.
- **Try to get retweets on Twitter.** You cannot always know who is going to be interested, but by getting tweets retweeted by individuals or organisations with lots of followers and clout you can reach people you never expected.
- **Be diligent in following up.** If a journalist, researcher or anyone else gets in touch asking for more information make sure you get it to them. You never know what they can do for your campaign.
- **Celebrate unexpected successes.** Like Hackney CAB Crowdmap, you may set some unexpected goals along the way. Think about how they can be integrated into your wider campaign goal and how new supporters can get involved.

Shelve It! amplified messages to people in power by tweeting them directly. Shelve It! tweeted the supermarkets and retailers that had been rated on their displays often including links to the website or images. They hoped that by shaming the retailers publically about their displays of lads' mags they might do something to improve it: cover them up and move them out of reach.

But the supermarkets scarcely responded. Tesco was the only supermarket to respond, doing so on just two occasions in 27 mentions, asking for more information to pass onto the stores. No subsequent communication was received about what had happened about the complaints.

Tweets to supermarkets were rarely retweeted (about seven tweets out of many). In addition, when others were telling Shelve It! about their ratings via Twitter, very few mentioned the @username of the supermarket. This meant that the impact on the supermarkets would have been negligible.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Our work made it clear that there are plenty of issues people want to address at a local level. Our campaigners focused on an array of local issues: housing benefit changes, debt, gangs, lads' mags, community spaces and city centre accessibility. And all were able to do so with the help of free or low-cost web tools and social networking sites.

From working with our six campaigners, we discovered the most important thing to consider in local online campaigning is how to reach and mobilise audiences. To engage people in a local campaign, considerations are similar to those in national campaigns. Campaigners have to decide who they want to involve and how.

But they need to bear in mind that not everyone will be online and so actions need to be relevant, accessible and engaging. Offline social networks and broader connections still need to be made the most of. Once mobilised, people still need to be kept up-to-date to harness and maintain their engagement and momentum.

However, getting local people involved and giving them a voice will not necessarily bring about change on its own. You still need to reach people who have influence. They can amplify the message and boost a campaign, taking it from agitation to making actual change.

The emergence of web tools has made reaching these people far easier. Decision makers are online and using social networking tools to keep abreast of issues and changes in society. Technology can help accelerate social progress and by using web tools and targeting people who can change things, local campaigns can be propelled to new places.

After all, as Ahmed said:
"We live in a technological world"

RESOURCES

To improve your skills:

Local360 Network

Local360 Network is an exciting online project from Media Trust, giving people the unique opportunity to connect, share and learn to tell their local story. Local360 Network is a UK-wide community of citizen journalists, community reporters and local storytellers, which gives them the tools, skills and connections to get more from their local news.

Community Organisers Resources

Community Organisers is a national training and development programme in community organising funded by the Office for Civil Society. Community Organisers has a bank of downloadable resources, templates, case studies and links to support Community Organisers.

The Change Agency online training resources

The Change Agency Education and Training Institute is an independent social movement initiative based in Australia with some involvement in international projects. The Change Agency's online training resources are drawn from workshops and the work of activist educators.
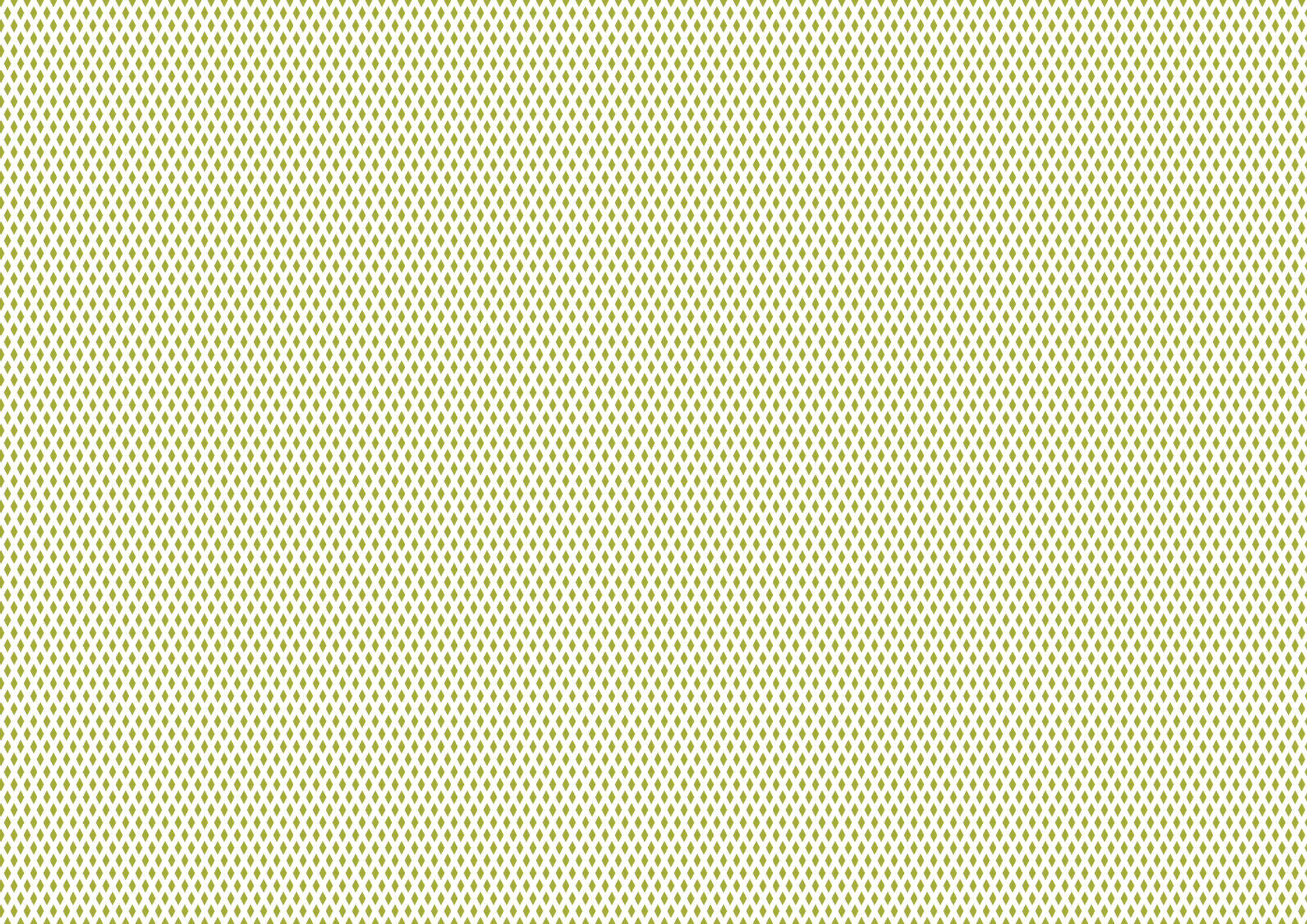
To help with your online activism:

Google Analytics

Google Analytics is a service from Google that generates statistics about a website's traffic and traffic sources. The product is aimed at marketers and can be used to track visitors to analyse where they are referred from, what they look at and where in the world they are. The basic service is free of charge and a premium version is available for a fee.

Hootsuite

Hootsuite is a social media management system allowing users to collaboratively execute campaigns across multiple social networks from one web-based dashboard. Users can integrate Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ pages. The free version allows users to gather basic analytic reports.