

# Finding Out For Yourself

## Community conversations: organising an Open Space event

# CAMPAIGN BOOTCAMP

Sometimes it's worth trying to bring together large numbers of people to talk about your chosen issue and to find out what people think.

Open Space is a structured way of doing this that can accommodate between 20 and 200 people. Under a general heading (for example 'How do we improve mental health in our town?') people decide what they want to talk about and form small groups to do so. People are then free to move between the discussion groups.

### Advantages



- The fact that people can choose what they want to talk about means that this is a great way of generating lots of ideas
- Open Space usually generates lots of enthusiasm and excitement and a good buzz.
- It's a good way of trying to recruit people that are interested in campaigning on the issue.

### Disadvantages



- The challenge of bringing together large numbers of people.
- It is a quite a difficult process to explain to people, however there are lots of excellent resources available to help you.
- There can be a lot of information to process
- It requires a lot of facilitation

## Open Space and Your Campaign

Open Space is a great tool to use early on in your campaign planning process as it will allow you to find out from a large number of people interested in your issue, what it is they think are the most important areas to focus on. It is an ideal way of structuring a public meeting so that people get the chance to talk to each other not just to listen to a few speakers.

Later on in the campaign planning process it's a good way for those involved to reflect on what has happened so far and to start planning what should happen next.

# TIPS:

1. After people have heard about the rules and structure of Open Space they are invited to identify an issue they want to start a conversation about (the people that start these conversations are called convenors). These conversation topics are stuck on the wall. Around the room are marked spaces where the different conversations will take place. The first round of Open Space starts with each of the convenors sitting in different spaces in the room, participants then choose which conversation group they want to go to.



2. Try and have at least two rounds of conversations, each one lasting a minimum of 40 minutes.

3. Make sure each group makes notes on what they talked about and what (if anything) they decided. Think about how each group might share that information afterwards



**You can find out more by looking at the following links:**

A seven minute video introduction to Open Space:

<https://goo.gl/CcHJ6G>

An introduction from campaign group People and Planet:

<https://goo.gl/ebGTTk>

Rhizome the community activists training group do a great series of fact sheets on Open Space including:

<https://goo.gl/XZNDoS>