

Collective Action

There are times when groups of carers want to work together to bring about positive change. This provides clues to some of the things that are useful when considering the “collective action” sometimes required to bring about development.

A. Leadership

Collective action rarely “just happens”.

Usually, good leadership is required to:

- Bind a group together with a common purpose/cause
- Form a “think tank”, steering group or core group
- Identify goals that are acceptable to the wider group
- Brainstorm strategies, role and areas of responsibility
- Remain realistic and staying within timeframes.

B. Strategy

When a group has become clear about what they want to achieve, the next step is often to determine the best ways for how this can be achieved. This may include:

- Anticipate emerging issues – try to guess what might happen as a result of what you might do
- Explore change strategies – obtain information on different ways of effectively influencing change
- Identify key people/organisations that may have similar goals and form relationships that will enable co-operation
- Develop a “plan” – who will do what by when
- Monitor and adapt approaches – evaluation what is working and what is not so successful. Continually adapt approaches based on how successful they are
- Develop networks – create new links and strengthen existing connections.

C. Accumulate accurate information

- Check facts. Initiate research or collect data that will support your initiative
- Learn about the groups that have an interest in what you are attempting to influence
- Contact local authority or central government key people
- Separate emotive feelings from rationale and well-reasoned strategies

- Learn who will make the final decisions and how they will do this.

D. Plan your action

- Get group agreement on who will do what by when
- Use a variety of ways to get your message across
- Establish communication channels/processes with other stakeholders
- Review/evaluate your plan – and its effectiveness – as you go. Adapt as required.

Types of collective action

- Letter-writing campaigns. Get as many people as possible to write to key decision-makers.
- Letters to the editor. Again, mobilise as many people as possible – provide people with a “resource” that gives them accurate information/examples.
- Media campaigns. Try to locate spokespeople who are very articulate.
- Press releases. Keep clear, brief and constructive.
- Telephone networks.
- Radio interviews.
- Regional hui/meetings. Use for spreading information and recruiting support.
- Web-based comment/campaigns. Use public consultation websites.
- Delegations. Form a collective and then seek meetings with key decision-makers.
- Presentation of formal submissions, for instance, a Select Committee process.
- Use newspaper advertisements to promote your message.

Source: This material has been adapted from *Seizing the Moment II. Turning Community Ideas Into Action* courtesy of the Nelson Community Work Advisory Committee