

# 5. How to: Protest

**What this How To guide is about:**  
how to organise a public protest, whether that's a candlelight vigil or a photo stunt.



The Children's Society organised a photo stunt and petition hand-in outside a government department to highlight our Debt Trap campaign, which called for children to be protected from exposure to payday loan adverts. It made it onto the BBC 6 O'Clock news.

When you think an issue is important and other tactics might not get enough attention, protesting can help raise public awareness, get media coverage and send a clear message to your target.

People can **protest** in lots of different ways:

- **A demonstration** is often a loud form of protest. People hold up signs and chant or sing in front of a targeted site.
- **A stunt** is like a demonstration, except the aim is to capture a message visually – it's usually something fun and humorous and often involves dressing up!
- **A march** is a large number of people gathering and walking a route while chanting. This can be quite a disruptive kind of protest.

The Children's Society is a national charity that runs local projects, helping children and young people when they are at their most vulnerable and have nowhere left to turn. We also campaign for changes to laws affecting children and young people, to stop the mistakes of the past being repeated in the future.

These How To guides aim to provide the information and tools you need to support our campaigns and make a difference by running events, speaking to politicians and getting a conversation going about the work we do in your church, workplace, school or with your neighbours.

**If you want to get involved, or are thinking of planning a campaign activity locally, then we'd love to hear from you. Email [campaigns@childrenssociety.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@childrenssociety.org.uk) or call us on 0300 303 7000**

- **A vigil** involves a group of people sitting or standing silently in a specific location. They're usually held at night, with candlelight. This can be a very positive way to raise awareness of an issue and causes minimal public disruption.
- **A sit-in** usually involves a group occupying a public or private space where they will attract attention. Members of the protest make a demand and stay put till this demand is met or at least discussed.

The right to protest is a vital part of our democracy. Protesting is legal, but there are some restrictions, so make sure you have spoken to The Children's Society first.

Create a change

The  
Children's  
Society

## How to organise your protest

# Your step by step guide to organising a protest

### STEP 1

#### Come up with an idea for your protest

- What is the message you want to get across – and to whom?
- Make the message as simple to understand as possible.
- What type of protest will work best? A photo stunt is visual and often amusing so it's attractive to the media. They are also good for sharing your message through social media.
- How can you visually get your message across?
- What props do you need?

### STEP 2

#### Decide on a time and location

- How does the time and location relate to your target?
- Who else will see the protest? Causing maximum inconvenience (eg in rush hour traffic) may not always result in the best outcome or sympathy for your issue. Give the council and/or police a heads-up, and ask us for advice first.

### STEP 3

#### Let people know

A successful protest needs to get people's attention.

- Spread the word through social media, posters, flyers, local media and word of mouth.
- Let us know your plans. We can help you spread the word.

### STEP 4

#### Think creative and catchy

- Make your stunt eye catching and visual. This will help attract the media and the general public.
- Simple slogans stick in people's memory. It needs to make sense and not be aggressive. You want passers-by to understand and be educated about your issue, not be confused or annoyed.
- A local band or people playing instruments can help keep things tuneful!

### STEP 5

#### Get equipped

- List the equipment that you'll need. For example: megaphones, cameras, banners, placards, props, flyers etc.
- Plan how you will get things to and from the location.
- Make sure to take your pictures in landscape as this will make them easier to share.

### STEP 6

#### Check the weather

- You don't want to be standing around getting too cold or too hot – bring whatever you will need (umbrellas, sun cream, water or snacks).
- Make sure your props are weatherproof!

### STEP 7

#### Be informative

A big part of protesting is increasing public awareness, so ensure some people at the protest can hand out flyers to passers-by or approach them to sign an action.

### STEP 8

#### Clean up your act!

Make sure you clean up when you're done – you don't want to get fined for littering after all your hard work!

#### Further information

For tips on how to fundraise at events – [childrenssociety.org.uk/fundraising-guide](http://childrenssociety.org.uk/fundraising-guide)

For ideas on planning a campaigning event – [How to: Plan an event](#)