

Public Protests. A protest, or demonstration, is a way of showing the volume of support for a campaign. A march can attract a wider audience than a protest that stays in one place and they work well if they have a focus at the end, such as the handing over of a petition.

Events of this nature take a lot of organising and should be planned well in advance so that you can advertise it. You may also need to notify authorities depending on the nature of your protest: the police should be notified if you are planning a march and, although you do not need permission, they might impose certain conditions, such as police presence.

Choose the timing of your protest carefully for maximum impact: avoid a clash with another public event but choose a day when the right people are likely to be present (i.e. public protests work better on weekends or holidays than on work days).

You should plan for your protest to take place in a significant, visible and easily accessed location. If you are organising a march you should think carefully about the route in order to avoid problems of access - contact your local council about this.

Use the media to advertise your protest widely and make a press release beforehand giving all the details. You should also advertise through posters, leaflets and local newsletters. Always include contact details in case people want to find out more.

Remember that you want to communicate your message as widely as possible: make placards and banners; design a logo for your campaign; write a motto, slogan or chant to draw peoples' attention during the demonstration.

Below is a list of Common Purpose's (an organisation that promotes socially responsible leadership) pros and cons of protests.

Benefits

- Protests are a good opportunity to hand out leaflets and engage new support
- Protest events can bring media coverage of your campaign
- A sizeable march demonstrates strength of feeling
- Large numbers are not needed to make stunts and vigils effective
- A vigil can be held anywhere, including outside the door of your target

Risks

- You might attract unwanted troublemakers seeking a forum
- If the weather is bad, people may not turn up
- If you are picketing an organisation's headquarters there may be strong opposition
- If you have poor turnout, you may demonstrate that you only have limited support for your aims
- You may need police permission and they might not oblige
- If you organise a noisy demonstration, you may alienate more 'moderate' supporters

