



Organising and running a **Ward Assembly**

What is written below is just a summary of the state of play at the present time (May 2024). What works is continually being developed as Assemblies occur in the UK and worldwide. This is a growing international movement. We are not alone!

So, let's get stuck in and look at an outline of what all this is about.

This document follows on from the big launch meeting: see this document [here](#).

From the launch there should be a team to organise an Assembly in each ward - or if there are not enough people for this - one team can look after 2-3 wards. The plan is to do an Assembly in each ward within 6 weeks of the launch so they can all feed into the all-constituency assembly/hustings, which should happen 7-8 weeks after the launch event.

The team should be using the following methods to promote an Assembly (see docs on how to do door knocking and stalls, as well as templates for leaflets and posters).

- promote the Assembly to at least 10 local community groups or networks they are involved in or know about.
- promote the Assembly on their own and local social media (e.g. neighbourhood Facebook groups).
- go out and speak with people directly - doing sessions of leafleting, door knocking, stall/voting boarding and putting up posters. - at least 8 sessions in total of at least 2 hours with 4 people - 64 hours.

Assemblies should take place within community residential areas, ideally in the centre of the ward, so people can get to a neutral venue (e.g. a church mosque or community centre) within a 10-15 -minute walk.

The run of the Assembly

Before the event starts:

As people come into the room there are two long tables at the door.

Four to six host people welcome people into the room standing in front of the tables.

They have a bit of a chat and ask people to put their details down on one of 4 laptops which are on the tables. They say: "Quite a lot of people are coming, so we are asking everyone to put their details down here if that is okay - thanks."

People put onto an online form their name, email, telephone number, street they live on, and postcode. They are asked to tick a yes/no box with the question: "Are you interested in supporting a community based independent standing in the national elections for the xxxx constituency?"

People are offered free food (something basic like soup and then cake) by one of the host people if they arrive between 6pm and 6.45, and then led to chairs arranged in circles of 6 people facing each other so they can have a chat.

The hosts put out more chairs in circles as more people arrive, so there are always enough chairs for people to sit on - but also not lots of empty circles - start with 3 circles of 6 chairs and take it from there.

The host asks everyone their names and says. "Okay, this is Joe from Harris Street - did you say that? Yeah? So you can have a chat while we are waiting to start - thanks."

All this helps people feel like they are being welcomed into the space, which is very important to build commitment to support the campaign.

The chat/food period of the event occurs from 6pm to 7pm. People stop serving food after 6.45pm.

Run of the Assembly itself:

The main event starts at 7pm.

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Introduction 7pm 10 minutes.

Two people (ideally not men) who are local to the ward welcome everyone to the event and say something about themselves - where they live, why they are into this campaign (5 mins).

Another two people (4 people should do the speaking parts) share going through the run of the event. They make clear: "This event is all about listening to you and the people of ward - and this election campaign is being run by the people in this constituency. This is how we are going to select a candidate and support them so they can win - that's the idea." People are told they can go and chat in a local pub afterwards.

For a standard mini-speech see here (*coming soon*).

Everyone who comes into the hall is already in a small circle of chairs. They turn their chairs around to listen to the speakers and turn them back to be part of their small group.

First go round (everyone speaks in turn) 7.10pm. 20 minutes.

A facilitator should join each group with their chair - making 7 people in the group.

Don't worry if one or two are a bit smaller or larger, but there should be at least 5 people and no more than 9.

In their circles the facilitator asks people to go round, one person speaking at a time on the following - "Your background. Why you came here tonight...and then mention one or two problems or things which are not right in our local area and the running of the country as a whole. Just some things that come to mind."

People are then told by the facilitator:

- "No big speeches please. This evening is about us listening to each other like we are going to listen to the people of this constituency - thanks."
- "We need a note taker who will give feedback to the main group if we are asked to." Ask someone if no one immediately volunteers - ideally a younger person or a woman - someone who does not usually speak for a group.

Do this for 20 minutes, to leave enough time for everyone to have a good go round and chat. People are told when they have 2 minutes left by the hosts going round each table to tell people in their groups, so people know to wind things up.

Feedback – 15 minutes

When people come back together 1 feedback person from 6 of the groups comes to the front and has two minutes to say what people were saying in their groups about what some of the problems are.

The small groups that are chosen to give feedback are selected randomly by the hosts going round to ask the notetaker from their group to speak. There will not be time to get feedback from every group, but 6 gives a good random selection of what people are thinking.

Explanation of the assembly based community candidate system – 10 minutes.

Then two of the speakers explain the plan.

“We are mobilising all of the constituency by holding local assemblies - big participatory get togethers like this one tonight - in each ward. We'll then work down into neighbourhoods and street meet-ups in people's houses or in a local pub. If people are listened to then it will be their campaign and they will come out to volunteer.”

2nd break out group session: major issues and policies they want a community candidate to support - select three ideas/policies – 20 minutes.

- The facilitator asks the group to go round in turn to say 3 things they think need sorting out - just an issue or a particular solution to it: they have 2-3 minutes each. The facilitator asks one person to start and for others to listen and not interrupt.
- The notetaker makes notes of the 3-4 of the most popular ideas and thoughts.
- People discuss these 3-4 ideas and try to come up with particular policies which everyone would like to see happen. Everyone is encouraged to put their hand up if they want to speak, so that people do not interrupt each other. The facilitators ask those that have not spoken: “what thoughts have you got on what has been said?”
- The facilitator stresses: “We don't need to come up with the final word on the matter - just select three things we all agree are important. What we want to be heard on - what we think needs sorting out.”
- These can be local or national or international issues - whatever people think are important for a community-based MP - someone who listens to the people on what this ward wants to see happen.

Feedback from notetakers – 30 minutes.

Each person has 2 minutes to argue for their 3 points/issues/policies (estimate of 60 people in the assembly = 10 groups 20 minutes).

The facilitators write up the ideas on the board, groups ideas and issues together, and selects the 5 biggest themes/issues/policies that people in the assembly want to see sorted out,

They read them out to the Assembly - what is on the big A4 sheets on the wall and everyone claps - having agreed: “5 things most people in this assembly think are important - thanks everyone.”

They stress again: “Ok everyone, this is not the last word on the matter. It’s just an idea of some of the things people in this ward want our community candidate to take on board. It is going to get written up and then go to an all consistency Assembly on the xxxx (date) and it will feed into the final key points for our community candidates to take on.

End of Meeting Asks – 15 minutes.

2 asks: donation and help with the next assembly.

Donations

One of the hosts asks everyone to put their hand up “If you would like to see a community candidate put up in this constituency” ...“excellent”...everyone claps.

“Okay, so everyone needs to support this process. Can everyone get their mobiles out and type in this on Google search or scan this QR code.” (big code put on a sheet on the wall). Everyone is asked to make a donation for the food tonight and to run the campaign, pay for venues and some full time organisers - this is going to be a big thing.”

“Everyone is being asked to give £20 a week to get this thing on the go. If you can’t give that then a tenner or a fiver - or even two quid. Everyone can give something once a month, right? We are all in this together. This thing is not run by billionaires, it’s run by us.”

“Okay everyone has two minutes to put your details in. If you don’t have a phone or can’t get it to work you can have a laptop. Put your hand up if you want a laptop.” The hosts distribute the 4 laptops with the page for the monthly donation on them.

“And remember, this is a national thing. We are building a new social movement here. So after the elections we can hold the government to account on the issues raised tonight, because it’s not just us here tonight, loads of people all round the country want action on these things. So your money helps to get all this on the go.”

The promotion of the next Assembly

So, say: “Okay, one last thing then before we finish. Put your hand up if you are into having another of these assemblies in this ward, in xxxxx (the place), so more people can have their say and get listened to - who is up for that? Just put your hand up - lovely.”

“Okay, so we plan to have another assembly in this ward on xxxx dates at xxxx venue - so you can all take leaflets here to promote it and sign up for the three stalls and 5 door knocking nights (whatever it is)- you don’t need any experience, just turn up and help out.”

“So we have.” - go through the times and places - the details.

“So, everyone is being given a pen. Can you all get up and put your name by 2 sessions, that is just 4 hours, two evenings of two hour sessions, to get the next assembly on the go.”

Note:

The hosts go round and give everyone a small black marker pen and then collect them once people have written up their commitments.

A1 sheets should be spread along a wall so there is enough room for around 10 people to write up their commitments at the same time.

There should be one A1 sheet for each session of promotion written in big letters with a black marker pen so it is super clear to see. There should be at least 8 sessions, so you need 8 sheets of A1 paper on the wall. This should include one called: “Help organise the next 8 people needed.”

The sheet should have the following layout:

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Stall/voting board (what is happening)

Market street (where date time and how long - start and finish time)

16th April

12-3pm

4 people needed (please write in your full name and telephone number - thanks).

Person 1.....

Person 2.....

Person 3.....

Person 4.....

Then at the end the hosts thank people

Say something like;

“Okay, that’s fantastic. Thanks so much to all of you. We are giving you all 10 leaflets to give to friends - people on your road - to ask them to come to the next Assembly. Can you ask at least 5 people to come to the next assembly? We are going to the pub if anyone wants to come along.”

The organisers/facilitators chat to any people who they think are enthusiastic and ask if they can help organise the next assembly face to face. “Hey thanks for your contribution tonight. It would be great if you can help me a bit with the next assembly. I don’t know if you have a bit of time to help sort things out.” People are more likely to help when they contribute and they are asked one to one.

After the Assembly:

Everyone is emailed the following day to thank them for coming and given the chance to sign up to the sessions and give a donation. (The data should be put directly onto Action Network).

Standard email text (*coming soon*)

Everyone is asked to bring 5 people to the next assembly. “You can come to a second one no problem - bring some friends.”

Also, people are invited to a follow up Zoom call “to organise the next assembly” at which the checklist is gone through for organising the next Assembly.

Two facilitators write up a report on the assembly outcome in plain language identifying the 5 key issues/policies and why people thought they were important.

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