

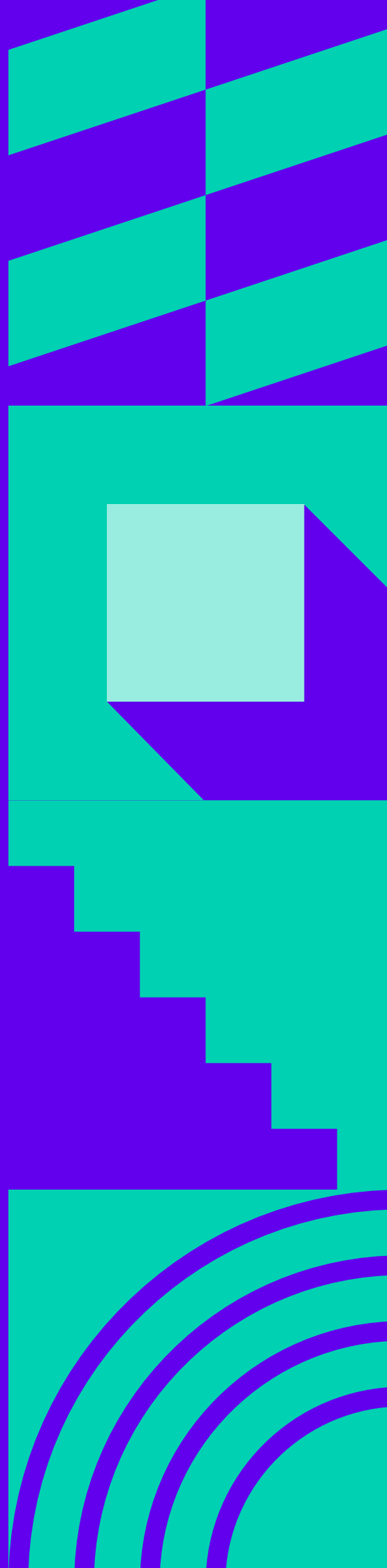
**CONNECTED  
BY DATA**

# Community Campaigns on Data

**Campaigners Toolkit  
Nov 2025**

This is the first public draft of our  
Community Campaigns on Data toolkit.

We welcome your feedback  
[hello@connectedbydata.org](mailto:hello@connectedbydata.org)



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# Introduction

**CONNECTED BY DATA** was founded in 2022 by Jeni Tennison as a campaign for a more collective approach to data governance. We work to transform narratives, policy and practice around data and AI to give communities a more powerful voice in shaping our data futures.

In 2024, we hosted a 'Community Campaigns on Data' cohort with support from [Luminate Strategic Initiatives](#), bringing together five grassroots campaign groups to learn together about working with data-related changes as a campaign goal.

Through a design-lab workshop, run in partnership with [Fabriders](#) and the [Collective Power Playbook](#), we developed and tested a set of activities that form the backbone of this toolkit. We've added in further activities and case studies from our cohort experience, and from additional research in order to prototype an end-to-end resource for planning community campaigns on data.

This toolkit is, however, a **work in progress** and necessarily unfinished. We're still learning about how to campaign effectively on data, and see this as part of a wider conversation on shaping data power in community interest. We welcome feedback to [hello@connectedbydata.org](mailto:hello@connectedbydata.org) and hope to be able to develop this resource further soon.

## What you will find in this toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help you to:

- Identify when a focus on data can help deliver your change goals.
- Develop and refine advocacy goals related to data.
- Work in partnership with affected communities – or within your own community – to build stronger campaigns using or about data.

If you are an experienced campaigner or community development practitioner use this toolkit to explore unique aspects of focussing on data.

If you are newer to campaigning use this toolkit alongside other campaigning resources (referenced throughout) to help you plan and run an effective community campaign on data.

This toolkit contains three main resources:

### Key Concepts

Introductory material on key concepts to consider in developing a community campaign on data.



### Case Studies

Brief examples to help your thinking about what makes campaigns on data different.



### Activities

Slides, worksheets and group activities you can use to plan for, and run, a community campaign on data.

## How to use it?

We've sequenced the material in this toolkit so that it can be used over a series of workshops with campaign leaders and community members.

Depending on your group you may also want to use some of the other resources and workshop activities we signpost out to, in order to address wider aspects of community development and campaigning.

We may also be able to run a bespoke training or capacity building programme with you, or help you find facilitators you could work with. Get in touch if you would like to find out more: [hello@connectedbydata.org](mailto:hello@connectedbydata.org)

## Our values

This toolkit is shaped by the values that guide Connected by Data's work.

**We work openly, collaboratively and relationally.** We share early ideas, drafts and work in progress in the open, while being aware and respectful of confidentiality and the impact on those involved.

**We work with an awareness of power, privilege and pluralism.** We strive to engage a representative and diverse set of people in the delivery of our work, and to amplify the voices of those who are typically under-represented.

**We strive to play a bridging role.** We work to connect different communities: from translating work between technology, policy and research communities, to making connections between grassroots groups and global networks.

## What this toolkit is not

This **is not** an introduction to campaigning in general. If you are new to campaigning we recommend checking out some of the resources below.

### Signposting: New campaigner?

- Being a campaigner: [Changemakers Toolkit](#)
- Developing a group campaign: [Act By Right workbook for youth-led community campaigns](#)
- Building coalitions: [Creative Coalitions Handbook for Change](#)

The following **resource directories** are good starting points to track down guidance on specific aspects of campaigning and activism: [The Commons Social Change Library](#); [Activist Handbook](#); [Resources – The Change Agency](#); [Neon's toolkits page](#) and [Training For Change Toolbox](#)

This **is not** a resource about how campaigns make use of data in their internal operations. For example, you **won't find** tips about which database or software platform to use to manage your supporter list, or about tools for online collaboration, nor do we cover how data science can be used to analyse supporter data, or to target campaign actions. You **also won't find** extensive how-to guidance on research techniques, data visualisation or the use of statistics in campaigns, although this may come up in discussions of counterdata\* campaigning.

This said, although our focus is not on using data to campaign, many of the activities in this toolkit could be applied by data-driven campaigns to think about how your own use of data responds to the voices of affected communities?

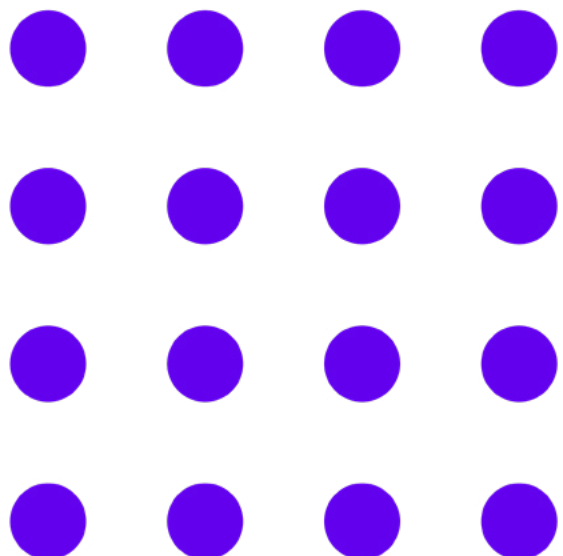
### Signposting: resources on other kinds of data campaigning

If you are looking for support on how your campaign group or social change organisation can use digital tools more effectively:

- Check out [Digital Tools for Activists](#)
- Look at the [support available from Catalyst](#) (UK-focussed), [DataKind UK](#) or [DataKind US](#) and [Data.org](#)
- Explore the [IFRC Data Playbook](#) for support building responsible organisational cultures and practices around campaign data use, or explore the [The Responsible Data Resource list](#).

If you are looking for guidance on campaigning *with* statistics and data visualisation:

- Explore [Visualising Information for Advocacy](#) from tactical technology collective
- Learn from Duncan Green on [Killer Stats](#), and [Killer Graphics](#)
- Read [Data Action: Using Data for Public Good](#)



\* For a definition of counterdata campaigning see section 3

# Part 1 Campaigning on data

**Datum:** *noun.* “a piece of information given or taken for granted”


Data is all around us. Dictionary definitions of data rest on data points being something we take for granted: accepted facts and agreed descriptions of the world. But this is misleading. Choices are made all the time about:

- What to collect
- How to collect it
- How to model it, such as which categories to use
- How to store it and who to share it with
- How it is used and analysed
- What to include or exclude in the analysis

The people most affected by those choices should have a say in how those decisions are made.

We are connected by data because our decisions affect others and their decisions affect us. **But we don't have to take data for granted.**



 **Watch:** [We are at a crossroads \(2 minutes\)](#)

**CONNECTED BY DATA** commissioned this short video to explain why action on data matters to us all.

It outlines many ways in which data impacts on the lives of communities on a day-to-day basis.

## Thinking differently about data

When we recognise the power of data, and the ways we want that power to work differently, we are not alone. Over recent decades activists, academics and communities across the world have been thinking differently about data. In this section we present four frameworks we draw on to think about data within community campaigns:

1. **Data Values**
2. **Data Feminism**
3. **Data Justice**
4. **Data Infrastructure & Ecosystems**

Read the brief descriptions of each of these frameworks below; if any resonate with you, you will find signposts to resources that you can explore more. If you choose to use one of these frameworks, we've pointed to activities that might be helpful to support deeper learning in your community.



### Activity: How do you feel about data?

Do people in your community get excited about data? Or do they zone-out the moment data is mentioned? We all have different experiences, perceptions and ideas about data.


Running an 'opinion spectrum' activity with your community to understand different perspectives on data can help to build shared understandings of data in the group and develop sensitivity to how each person thinks and feels about data and digital technology.


**Access:** ['How do you feel about data' instructions and slides](#)

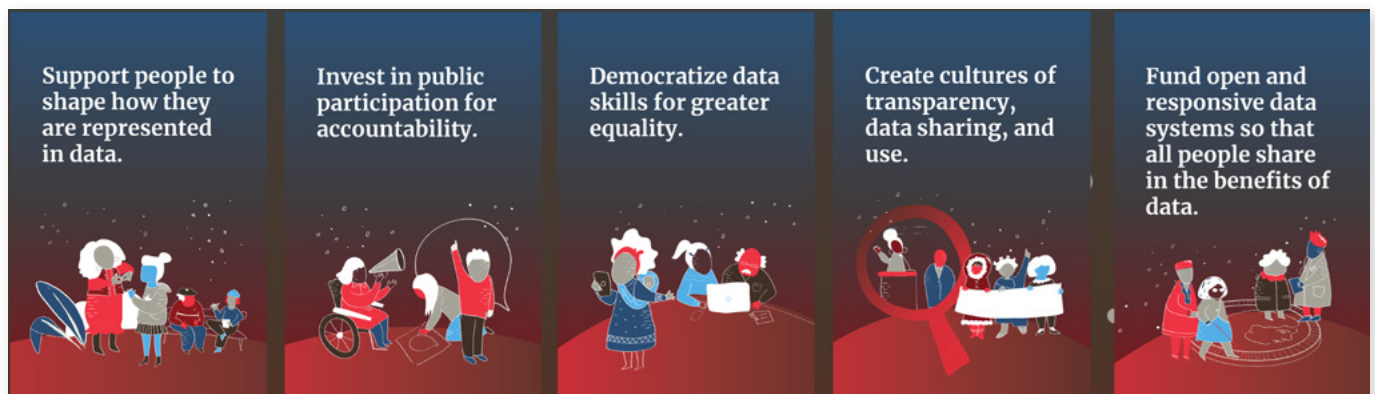
## Data Values

The Data Values Manifesto, developed by the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data sets out five key messages. Developed as messages for national statistics agencies and governments, the manifesto calls for: (1) support for people to shape how they are represented in data; (2) investment in public participation for accountability; (3) democratisation of data skills for greater equality; (4) cultures of transparency, data sharing and use; and (5) open and responsive systems so that all people share in the benefits of data.

 **Read:** [Data Values website](#) or [The Voices of Data Values](#) (Case studies / stories)

 **Watch:** [What does a fair data future look like to you? \(1m21s\)](#) or [Data Value Community Meetings](#) (playlist)


 **Activity:** [The Data Values Conversation Starter Cards](#) support a group to unpack how manifesto principles might apply to your campaign.




## Data Justice

Data Justice has developed as an academic field of study, and a way of exploring issues of visibility, representation, access to technology non-discrimination and anti-oppressive practice in data. As the [Turing Commons](#) explores, Data Justice theory and practice also draws substantially on intercultural, decolonial and non-western perspectives to look at data in a global context.

 **Read:** [Turing Commons introduction to Data Justice](#)

 **Watch:** [Social Justice in an Age of Datafication \(27m30s\)](#) and [‘There is no data justice without social justice’ \(2m41s\)](#)

 **Activity:** [Data Justice in Practice: A guide for impacted communities](#) is an extensive resource including stakeholder engagement guidance. Choose guiding questions from page 55 onwards to discuss different pillars of data justice with your group.







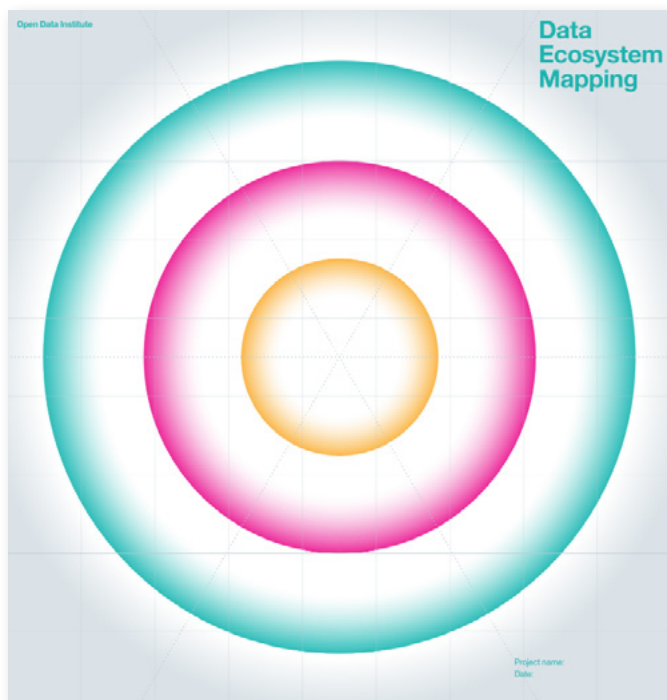
## Data Infrastructures and Ecosystems

Thinking about data as infrastructure calls to mind analogies between digital systems, and the infrastructures we see around us every day: roads, railways, power lines, water supplies and so-on. This can bring into view (a) how choices over infrastructure design have long-lasting consequences; (b) processes for community engagement with infrastructure (e.g. inputting to spatial planning processes; protests about roadbuilding; accountability initiatives). Thinking of data ecosystems invites us to consider the different people, communities, and organisations that rely on a given data infrastructure.

 **Read:** [State of Open Data – Data Infrastructure and Exploring Participatory Public Data Infrastructure](#)

 **Watch:** [Rethinking data and rebalancing power](#) (1hr1m49s)


 **Activity:** Use the Open Data Institutes' [Data Ecosystem Mapping Tool](#) to map data infrastructures, actors and value exchange.




## Data Feminism


Developed by Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein, data feminism advocates for using data to promote social justice, address inequality, and amplify marginalised voices. It challenges traditional power dynamics in data science, aiming to create data practices that are more ethical, inclusive, and equitable. The seven principles of data feminism ask us to: (1) examine power; (2) challenge power; (3) elevate emotion and embodiment; (4) rethink binary and hierarchies; (5) embrace pluralism; (6) consider context; and (7) make labour visible.


Critical within data feminism is a connected focus on intersectionality – or 'intersectional feminism' – which opens up space for thinking about how race, class, sexuality, disability, and various other axes of oppression might be considered or serve as the starting point for data campaigns. For this reason those interested in Data Feminism may also be interested in approaches to data led by a range of minoritised groups – for example, LGBTQIA+ or Black and racially minoritised groups.

 **Read:** [Data Feminism book](#) (available in print, and in open access online chapters)

 **Watch:** [Data Bites on Data Feminism](#) (59m41s)

 **Activity:** [Print out data feminism principle postcards](#) and discuss how these principles might apply to your campaign

 **Read:** [Queer Data](#) (available in print and digital format)

 **Explore:** [Data for Black Lives resource library](#)



Data Feminism infographics by Catherine D'Ignazio, Lauren Klein and Marcia Diaz. 2020. (CC-BY-SA)



# The Community Campaigns on Data Canvas

There are many parts to running a successful community campaign. A campaign canvas provides a framework for thinking about the different questions you will need to answer in order to plan and run your campaign. Building on the campaign canvas from Mobilisation Lab, we've captured some key questions for community campaigns on data in the canvas below.

As you work through this toolkit, you should be able to identify, or refine, your answers to each of the questions in the canvas below. For example, in a later section of this toolkit titled 'Getting To Know Your Community and Change Goals' (see Part 2), we will work through points one and two of the canvas below, building on these points to address all nine canvas topics below over the remainder of this guide.

<b>1 Community</b> What defines our community? What is the challenge we want to address?	<b>4 What systems do we need to intervene in?</b> What do we know about the relevant cycles of data creation and use?  What do we know about the way data connects with policy and action?  What forces shape the status quo?	<b>7 Powerful communication</b> How can we shape compelling campaign messages, and communicate our campaign clearly?
<b>2 Change</b> What is the change we want to see?	<b>5 Allies and opposition</b> Who else is connected to the systems of data we want to change?	<b>8 Powerful actions</b> What resources, coalitions, strategies and tactics can we draw on?
<b>3 Engaging with data power</b> What specific changes related to data and digital technology will help deliver the change we want?  Getting access? Re-defining? Data protection? Changing governance? Creating counter-data? Using data?	<b>6 Collective power &amp; care</b> How can we mobilise our community and allies to call for change? How can we do this in caring, inclusive and community-driven ways? How can we care for ourselves in the process of our campaign?	<b>9 Learning and iterating</b> How do we learn and reflect together?

This canvas is not exhaustive. There may be other questions you need to consider. The [Mobilisation Lab canvas](#) also includes questions about assumptions, risk assessment and impact measurement. Our canvas above also does not address questions of resourcing or fundraising for campaign activities: both in terms of raising funds, and who holds and manages funds.



## Activity: The data campaigns canvas

You can download a blank copy of the canvas [here](#) (Google Doc, Word Doc, PDF) to fill in over the course of developing your campaign.

# Part 2 Knowing Our Community

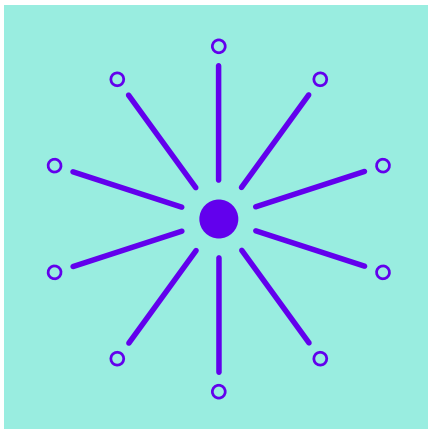
**Community: a group of people with shared identity, interest or concern; a distinct segment of society; a group living in the same locality; a group with something in common.**

A community campaign on data is rooted in the idea of collective power. Community campaigns are something led *by*, or done *with*, rather than done *to*, people affected by an issue.

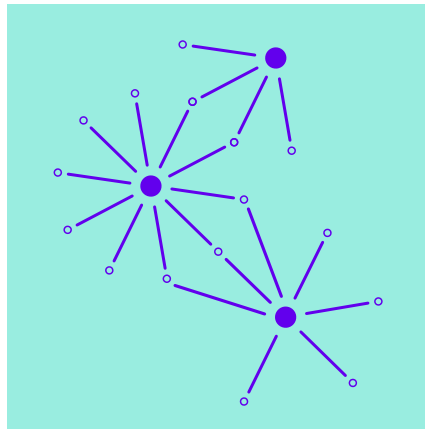
So often, the ways we have power over data are individualised: each of us are separately asked to consent to collecting, using or sharing data, and can only raise complaints about how we have been personally affected.

But these individual transactions can add up to collective impacts. Sometimes a community might be defined as *all* the people interacting directly with a particular data

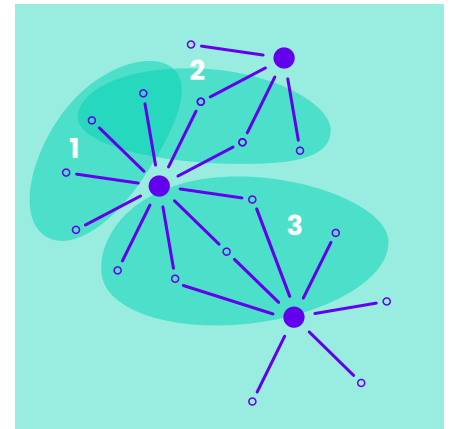
system. But often data-based systems affect people beyond those actively interacting with them: a system used by a local authority to prioritise interventions impacts all the people affected by those interventions, who might not even be aware the system exists. Other times, the way a collection of data systems are designed or operated might disproportionately affect particular groups: such as when bias in data collection and use leads to over-surveillance, or negative outcomes, for people of colour, or when failures to collect important data mean people living with particular health conditions are not having their needs met.



Our interactions with data are often individualised.



As we interact with many data systems, this leaves us divided and disempowered.



But, when we find others similarly affected by that data system, we can build community, and collective power.

Based on [Doodling data communities – our alternative to atomisation?](#) (Connected by Data Weeknotes – March 2023)

A community campaign on data might start from a defined community that identifies how data is affecting them, or it might involve finding and building community amongst those affected by data so that they can act together.

Campaigning with community can be important because:

- We are stronger together than working alone;
- Campaign asks and actions are more accountable to, and centre the needs of, those affected;
- We build the capacity of communities to act on data again in future;
- Communities can share the load, and work in caring ways;
- There is joy to be found in working together in community.



## Case study: Building Community through Data Literacy

Researcher Elinor Carmi has explored how different marginalised communities are affected by data, and the importance of data literacy work to build a sense of the collective impacts of data. In Elinor's work, she finds that:

- **People Care:** The majority of people don't know how the data ecosystem works, and as a result we are then told "*people don't care*" what's happening to their data. But when we talk to people – they do care, but don't know where to begin and what to do about it.
- **People are not widely aware of the full range of data being collected**, or who has access to their data. For example, people thinking about health data might think just about direct health records, but not searches for health information etc. which might be held by lots of other kinds of organisations people are not aware of.
- **Awareness often doesn't translate into action**, because people don't know their digital rights. But research shows that, the more people know about their data and their digital rights, the more they exercise those rights.

Elinor has explored how creative approaches to building data literacy can lay the groundwork for more powerful

community campaigns. Together with Professor Simeon Yates, Elinor developed Seven Principles for Developing Citizens Data Literacy: 1) **Ensure citizens feel more empowered** and have practical and alternative routes to enact that empowerment; 2) **Consider the design and practical challenges citizens face** in managing and controlling the data they share or "give off" whilst also being actively involved with others via the plethora of platforms in our digital society; 3) **Make clear to citizens their rights – as citizens not just consumers** – to make claims in regard to data use, sharing and trading and also of digital systems and platforms; 4) **'Meet citizens where they are'** in terms of their digital and social experience and context; 5) **Address the challenge that those adults most in need of support are very likely outside formal educational settings**; 6) **Do not just focus on skills** – in fact there is lots of help out there for skills – it is the critical awareness and proactive citizenship that are missing in most training and support; 7) **Seek to provide deep critical consciousness the power relationships in our datafied society** and support them to exercise their right to challenge this imbalance and demand change.

Dr. Carmi is also part of the Critical Big Data & Algorithmic Literacy Network, where you can find multiple resources and activities around data and algorithmic literacies in multiple languages, from AI, digital rights, facial recognition and many more.

## Getting to know your community & change goals

The first two sections of the Community Campaigns on Data Canvas invite you to consider the following questions:


### 1 Community


What defines our community?  
What is the challenge we want to address?


### 2 Change

What is the change we want to see?

There are many resources available to support community mapping and community building in order to help you consider these questions. A few we find useful are:

 **Activity:** The **Act by Right** campaign workbook includes a module on Understanding Community with a set of activities to use in thinking about what community is, the different boundaries of community we can draw, and the good and bad of a community-based approach to campaigning.

 **Theory & Practice:** An Introduction to Community Mapping from the Community Organising People Power Manual introduces approaches to understanding and building community.

 **Activity:** The Collective Power Playbook includes activities for Turning Individual Experience into Community Solutions that draw on insight from all community members when identifying and setting change goals.



### Case study: Just Treatment

Just Treatment is a patient-led campaign working to ensure patients and the NHS always come before corporate profits.

In each campaign they run, Just Treatment organises people affected by a particular issue such as youth mental health, or the price of drugs for a health condition. They often use surveys to understand the issues that community members are concerned with, and interviews to develop a deeper understanding of this. Through this, they can start to develop a community of people to share their stories, join in campaign actions, and shape how the campaign is run.

Read more about understanding a community's perspectives on data through surveys and interviews in [Our Health Data Stories](#).

## Co-producing with community

Co-production is an approach to working together in equal partnership and for equal benefit. In some cases, a campaign arises directly from a community. In other cases, you might be enrolling a community to support a campaign goal you have already identified. Adopting co-production values and approaches can ensure this is a mutually beneficial, inclusive and respectful relationship.

**Learning and activities:** The Co-Production Collective have collated a collection of resources on the value, process and practicalities of co-production.

Modelling co-production values involves:

- Acknowledging different types of knowledge and experience
- Making time for reflexive discussion
- Challenging ourselves and each other
- Building relationships built on trust and mutual respect
- Deciding roles and input together (including campaigning roles!)
- Co-authoring final outputs

Co-production impacts upon identity: researchers, campaigners, policy experts, and people with lived experience may all find their identity challenged.

It is important to identify, be open about and create mechanisms and communication channels to address structural issues that might cause tensions while co-producing

campaigns with communities. For example, some people might have their time paid for by their organisation, but others might be working voluntarily. Additionally, power dynamics related to race, gender, class, sexuality, disability or some other aspect of identity, may play out within communities that share a common goal.



### Case study: London Renters Union

London Renters Union (LRU) taps into the existing community of renters, organising through local branches and inviting people living in rented accommodation to join as union members. Members can become involved in campaign actions in solidarity with each other, from supporting tenants involved in landlord disputes and non-violent resistance to evictions, to collective campaigns to change the law on no-fault evictions.

In developing their campaign for better access to data on registered landlords (currently only available in patchwork form from individual local authorities, often through freedom of information requests), LRU campaigners placed a particular emphasis on having a mandate from the whole union, rather than running ahead with a few members taking on a data campaign as a side-project without consulting with and reporting back to their wider community.

## The change we want to see

Whether your campaign starts from a community connected by geography, shared interest, or by data, think about the ultimate change you want to see in the world.

In the next section we will dig into **data as a lever of change**, but for now, think about describing how the world would be if your campaign succeeds.




**Activity:** Act by Right includes a set of activities to adapt for thinking about how to set your campaign goals.

# Part 3 Knowing Our Goals: Data as a Lever of Change

**Data is powerful. But that power is often hidden, or hard to grasp.**

By the end of this section, you should be able to complete **section 3** of the data campaigns canvas: **what changes related to data and digital technology will help deliver the change your community wants to see in the world?**

You might already have a sense of how data practices need to change, or you may know the direction you want to travel in, but still need to work out exactly how to use data as a lever of change. In this section we introduce **five different kinds of data campaigns**, and provide activities you can use to clearly describe the specific actions related to data and digital technology that will help deliver your overall change goals.

 **Watch:** Data is intensely political. It is how we achieve change in the world (1m28) to hear from different campaigners about how data matters to them.

## Different kinds of campaign

Campaigning on data can mean many things. We've identified five broad kinds of data campaign:

- 1 Access campaigns** seek to secure access to key datasets, either once-off, or as an ongoing source of open data or digital public infrastructure.
- 2 Definition campaigns** seek to influence the categories used to model data. These questions of dataset design determine who and what is made visible through data, and what is left out, and rendered invisible.
- 3 Data protection campaigns** support individuals and communities to exercise their rights to better understand and control how data about them is collected, used and shared
- 4 Data governance campaigns** seek a role for affected communities in ongoing decision-making over how data is collected, used, interpreted or shared.
- 5 Counterdata campaigns** seek to challenge official or dominant narratives around an issue by collecting and analysing alternative, often community-collected, datasets.

A campaign might involve elements of different kinds, as, for example, in a campaign that seeks to secure representation on a governance board (data governance campaign) with the goal of also influencing definitions used in a data collection exercise (definition campaign).

On the following pages you will find a series of case studies that give examples of these kinds of campaigns.



## Campaign case studies



### Data Access Campaigns

A data access campaign calls for certain datasets to be made freely available for re-use. Open data campaigns are a particular form of data access campaign.

#### FreeThePostcode

In 2009 the civic technology community faced high costs in accessing postcode data which was essential to build online tools connecting people to local services or political action. A key dataset – mapping postcodes to locations – was collected and owned by public bodies, but only available for a fee. Campaigners tried to create a grassroots alternative dataset, free of intellectual property restrictions – but this was a laborious process.

In order to secure access to the official data, a loose coalition of campaigners wrote media articles, talked to politicians, and organised an effective civil disobedience stunt. They created a free website hosting an unofficial copy of the postcode dataset (technically breaching the law), and named the site after the Minister who originally launched postcodes (Ernest Marples). They wired up high-profile civic websites to rely on this unofficial service, so when the official custodian of the postcode data took legal action to shut it down, these useful civic services went offline too. This gave campaigners fuel for a higher-profile media campaign about the problems of closed data. A petition on the government website gained 2,335 signatories.

In May 2010, postcode data was made available as open data (although address data remains closed).



**Campaign type:** Data access (open data)

**Ultimate goals:** Provide affordable public good technology services; unlock social and economic potential of data.

**Communities involved:** Civic technology community; users of public services.

**Organisation:** Informal coalition.

**Methods used:** Media, petitions, stunts, civil disobedience.

**Sources:** [1], [2], [3]



## Definition campaign

A definition campaign seeks to influence the categories used in collection or analysis of data.

Questions of dataset design determine who and what is made visible through data, and what is left out, and rendered invisible.

### Count Them In

The “Count Them In” campaign, led by the Royal British Legion and Poppyscotland, successfully lobbied for the inclusion of a question about military service in the 2021 Census in England, Wales, and Scotland. This community-driven change ensures that, for the first time, data on the Armed Forces community will be collected, with the aim of identifying and addressing their needs. The campaign commenced in 2016 and culminated in legislation change in 2020.

The campaign saw friends and family of armed forces members write to their local MPs, and share the stories of individuals who had served.

Over time, it garnered widespread support from MPs, councils, and the public, highlighting the importance of recognising the contributions and requirements of veterans and their families.



**Campaign type:** Defining data

**Ultimate goals:** inclusion in census for a community to better document their needs

**Communities involved:** past and present members of the armed forces

**Organisation:** Royal British Legion and Poppyscotland

**Methods used:** lobbying, parliamentary engagement, case studies

**Sources:** [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#)

## Data Protection Campaign

A data protection campaign supports individuals and communities to exercise their rights to better understand and control how data about them is collected, used and shared

### The School Census

The **#BoycottSchoolCensus** campaign stopped schools from collecting data on children's country of birth nationality and sharing this with the Home Office where it was to be used for "carrying out immigration checks through schools".

When outline information about plans for this data collection and use became public in 2015, campaigners used Freedom of Information requests, and worked with MPs to ask parliamentary questions, to reveal details.

A coalition, launched by teaching staff, parents and civil society groups urged parents and schools to boycott the new data collection and used social media to raise wide awareness of this call. By 2017, 25% of schools and families did not return required nationality data. Teachers Unions passed motions opposing the collection of nationality and country of birth data.

An appeal was made to the Information Commissioner's Office, and campaigners launched a crowdfunder to be able to threaten legal action. In 2018, the government ended the collection of nationality and country of birth data, and data that had been collected was later deleted. However, information sharing with the Home Office was not stopped.



**Campaign type:** Data protection

**Ultimate goals:** Prevent pupil data being used in immigration 'hostile environment', and protect the rights of all pupils.

**Communities involved:** Teachers, parents, pupils, civil society: migrants rights, human rights, children's rights group.

**Organisation:** Formal coalition 'Against Borders for Children'.

**Methods used:** FOI, Parliamentary engagement, Media, Boycott, Crowdfunding, Legal action.

**Source:** [\[1\]](#)

## Data Governance Campaign

A data governance campaign seeks a role for affected communities in ongoing decision-making over how data is collected, used, interpreted or shared.

### Trade Union Campaigns

The Trade Unions Congress (TUC) have developed a programme of work focussed on supporting workers to have a voice whenever new data and AI systems are introduced into the workplace. Through training resources for workplace trade union representatives, they highlight existing rights (such as the right to be consulted under data protection laws), and suggest routes for developing collective bargaining and worker representation in technology decisions.

In 2021 the TUC published a manifesto on Dignity at Work at the AI Revolution calling for a new statutory duty to consult, and in 2024 ahead of the UK General Election they put forward a draft Artificial Intelligence (Employment and Regulation) Bill, drafted in consultation with a wide range of groups, to highlight changes a new government should explore.



**Campaign type:** Data governance

**Ultimate goals:** Workers to be consulted when new technologies are introduced

**Communities involved:** trade union members, national trade unionists

**Organisation:** Trade Unions Congress and other unions

**Methods used:** Training and capacity building, collective bargaining, manifesto / proposing solutions, lobbying.

**Source:** [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#)

## Counterdata campaign

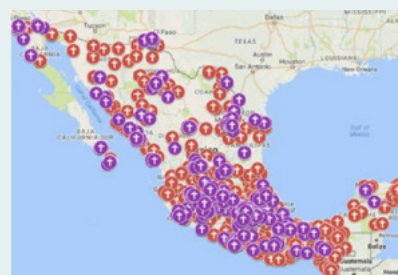
Counterdata campaigns create and analyse datasets in ways that challenge dominant narratives and understanding of an issue.

### Data Against Feminicide

Violence against women, including lethal violence (feminicide), is a global scourge, frequently under-counted and not reflected in official statistics, leading to inadequate policy response. The Data Against Feminicide project has documented the work of numerous individuals and groups across the globe who have sought to confront this ‘missing data’ challenge through creating counterdata. This involves monitoring media reports, collating geolocated datasets, creating data visualisations and reports, and advocating for changes in state data collection practices.

D'Ignazio et. al. emphasis how “*activists enact alternative epistemological approaches to data science that center care, memory, and justice*” [2], and note the need to recognise the emotional burden placed on volunteer activists who deal with collection of traumatic data.

For some activists, ‘visibilising’ feminicide is their main focus, whereas for others, counterdata practices are part of wider campaign strategies and activities that involve direct work with those affected.



**Campaign type:** Counterdata

**Ultimate goals:** Eliminate Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Improve state collected data on GBV

**Communities involved:** Grassroots activists; local, national and international feminist groups.

**Organisation:** Various

**Methods used:** Media monitoring; collaborative datasets; data visualisation;

**Source:** [1] [2] [3]




### Activity: Different kinds of campaign


- Share the five kinds of campaign with your group and discuss which feel like the best description of your goals.  
and/or
- Share the campaign case studies with your group and discuss what you could learn from these examples for your campaigning?  
and/or
- Brainstorm different examples of campaigns you know of that have focussed on data, and discuss what kind of campaign they were.

The previous five pages have been laid out so that you to print and cut out as workshop resources. You could hand around definitions, full case studies, or just the left-hand part of each case study to support group discussion.

### Additional resources

**Watch:** During our community campaigns on data cohort we created a set of [video shorts](#) that describe different kinds of campaigns. Think about the kind of campaign you feel each one represents.

 **Read:** The book [State of Open Data: Histories and Horizons](#) provides examples of open data campaigns across many different sectors and settings around the world, and introduces a range of different open data communities that could be supportive of data access campaigns.

 **Resource:** [WhatDoTheyKnow.com](#) provides guidance on using the [Freedom of Information \(FOI\) Act](#) to request data from public bodies, particularly useful in data access campaigns, but often a valuable tool in all kinds of campaign.

## Communicating Campaign Goals: What do we want? Why do we want it?

“All campaigns are data campaigns. And data campaigns are often really about much more than data.”

One challenge that many campaigns on data face is keeping a focus both on relatively ‘technical’ reforms to how data is handled and an emphasis on the reasons why this matters to the lives of individuals and communities. For example, if you want to change the way ‘care’ is defined in national statistics, you might spend lots of time talking about the finer points of survey design – but it will be important to also keep talking about how changing the values of a drop-down list will make a difference to the everyday life of carers.

Developing and rehearsing simple messages that explain the **what** and the **why** of your campaign can be useful both to sharpen a campaign strategy, and to include the whole community in defining and refining campaign goals.

When we brought a group of different community campaigns on data together, we used a simple placard-making activity as an ice-breaker to introduce our campaigns to each other. You can also use this activity within your community and/or campaign to explore different ways to communicate your focus on data, and why it matters.



### Activity: Data Campaign Placards

In technology development, ‘user stories’ are often used to describe the combination of technical change and ultimate impact.

A user story is made of three parts: as an [ actor ] I want [ change ] so that [ impact ]

In this activity you will create a ‘data campaign placard’ based on this model:

- The person holding the placard is the actor
- On one side, write a slogan for the direct change you want to see
- On the other, write down the ‘So what?’: the ultimate impact this should create.

**Resources:** [Data Campaign Placards worksheet](#)

## Recap: completing the canvas

Based on the activities above, you should now be able to update section 3 of the data campaigns canvas.

### 3 Engaging with data power

What specific changes related to data and digital technology will help deliver the change we want?

Getting access? Re-defining? Data protection?  
Changing governance? Creating counter-data? Using data?

# Part 4 Knowing Where to Intervene

**“We are connected by data – but we don’t always see all the connections at first. To act effectively on data, we need to develop a clear view of what, where and who is involved in its creation and use.”**

Who else is affected by the change you want to see to how data is used? Datasets and systems are often embedded in the practices of many different individuals, organisations and communities. For a successful campaign you may need to identify the wider impact your campaign goals could have and then work out who your allies and opponents might be as you push for change in your chosen area.

In this section, we introduce a simple abstraction – the data cycle – for starting to think about the different points at which production, sharing and use of data affects your community, and others, and where you can intervene.

## The Data Cycle

Even for a simple dataset, there are many different points at which decisions are made about how data is defined, collected, shared and used. As datasets and systems develop over time, these may be regularly revisited. For example, some datasets are updated each year. Others are updated daily or in real-time.

As a community, you may only encounter one or two ‘faces’ of a dataset: such as when you are asked to supply data, or when it is used in ways that affect you. However, understanding all the different stages of producing and maintaining a dataset or system can be important to identifying where to intervene.



### Activity: Mapping a data cycle

Part 1 of this activity encourages your group to think about the concept of a data cycle: what different activities are involved in producing and making a difference with data?

Part 2 encourages you to think about where the data cycle touches on your community, the key actors who shape it, and where there are potential points for intervention.

**Download:** [Data cycle worksheet](#)



## People and power: influencing change

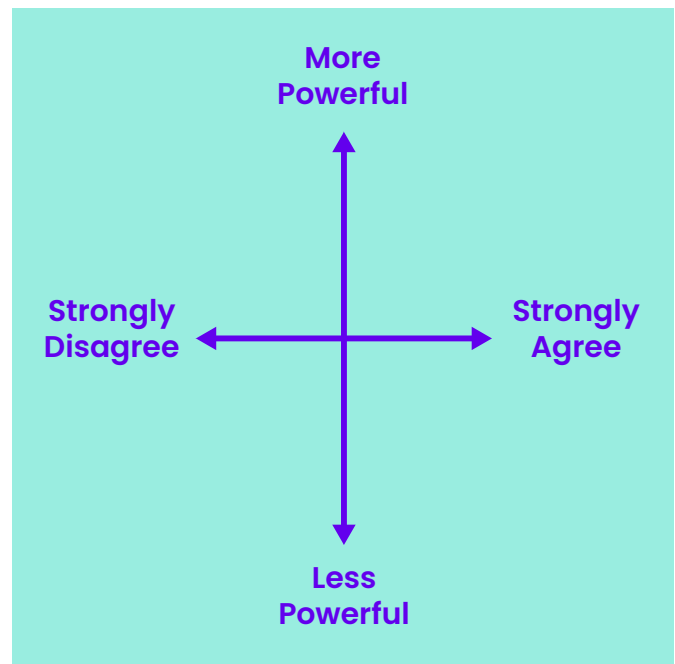
As you build up a picture of the data cycle(s) or data ecosystems you are intervening in you will start to identify a range of different actors (individuals, organisations or communities) who:


- Have direct influence over the datasets or systems you want to change;
- May be positively or negatively affected by changes to the dataset or system;
- Have an interest in maintaining, or changing, the status quo.

Understanding these actors is crucial to developing an effective campaign strategy.

### Power mapping

Power mapping is an established method for plotting out individuals and organisations on a simple matrix: those who agree or disagree with the change you want to create, and those who are more or less powerful.

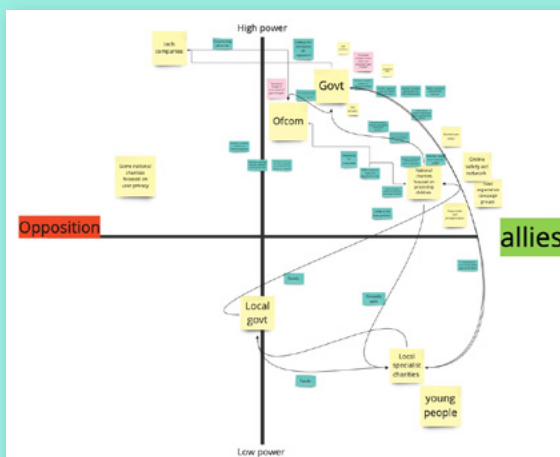


 **Activity:** The Beautiful Trouble toolkit contains a guide to power mapping.



### Case study: Behind Our Screens

Behind Our Screens are a group of survivors of online harm, working to amplify the experiences and perspectives of young people to create a safer online world. As part of the community campaigns on data cohort they developed a counterdata campaign to collect and share survivor stories so that online safety policymaking would reflect, rather than sideline, lived experience.



Through power mapping Behind Our Screens identified powerful actors such as technology companies who might stand in opposition to their campaign, and other powerful actors such as the regulator, Ofcom, and various other Government agencies who, whilst not opposed to their campaign messages, were also not vocally supportive.

By contrast, many supportive organisations, including national charities, and lived experience groups, were seen as less powerful in shaping the detail of online safety policy. Young people themselves were identified in the 'low power' portion of the map.

Using the map, the campaign was able to think about (a) how less powerful actors can influence more powerful actors; (b) how to turn opposition into allies; (c) how to build the power of less powerful actors.

## Persona Profiles

Once you have mapped different stakeholders on a power map, it is useful to think in more detail about *why* people hold their existing positions and perspectives, and how they might be motivated to become campaign supporters, or at least to drop their opposition.

Campaigns on Data: Persona Profile Template	
Name	[ Picture: Draw or paste an image here ]
Occupation	
Their goals	
Values (how do they want to be seen?)	
What is their role in the data cycle? <small>E.g. Creating data? Affected by analysis? In control of data sharing?</small>	
How do they feel about your campaign? What change (or not) do they want to see? <small>Ally &lt;----- Neutral -----&gt; Opponent</small>	
Motivations for getting involved?	Barriers to getting involved?
How might the campaign support their goals?	How might it conflict with their goals?
Who else are they trying to keep happy with their decisions about data? (Power holders) or How 'disruptive' are the changes they want to see? Who else is affected? (Community members)	

Creating persona profiles provides a way to think in detail about the factors motivating particular actors with whom you will need to engage. A persona could be based on your knowledge of a real person or a group of people, but often they work best when anonymised or generalised to provide a simplified character. This avoids discussions being too focussed at this stage on second guessing how a particular individual might interact.



**Activity:** FabRiders have documented how to run a persona activity

Using persona exercises in a group workshop can help share knowledge within your community about different people you might need to engage with, and can draw upon different experiences across the group.

We've created a [custom template for data campaign personas](#) that includes questions about the role that a person plays in the data cycle, how your campaign might support or challenge their goals, and who else someone is trying to keep happy with their decisions about data.

“Mapping out the data cycle, and then thinking about the people we need to convince to make change through a persona activity, we realised that they will need to hear not just from us, but from many organisations and communities before they are going to be ready to act.

We recognised our first step to success was not in getting the campaign message right, but in building a coalition – a bigger community – that could act together for change.

When we work together, lots of isolated low-power organisations can come together to have stronger collective power, and be a real shared voice for change.”

– Participant, Community Campaigns on Data Design Lab (paraphrased)

## Recap: Completing the Canvas

Based on data cycles, power mapping and personas, you should find you are able to update your answers in section 4 and 5 of the data campaigns canvas.

### 4 What systems do we need to intervene in?

What do we know about the relevant cycles of data creation and use?

What do we know about the way data connects with policy and action?

What forces shape the status quo?

### 5 Allies and opposition

Who else is connected to the systems of data we want to change?

# Part 5 Planning and Executing Action

By this point in your campaign journey

- You will have understood your community and the change you want to see;
- You will have identified how changes to data practices can serve your ultimate change goal;
- You will have explored the dataset or systems you need to intervene in; and
- You will have mapped out the stakeholders who will be your allies or opponents.

In this section, we turn to campaign plans and action, with a focus on co-producing the campaign with the community. This addresses the last part of the data campaigns canvas.

## 6 Collective power & care

How can we mobilise our community and allies to call for change? How can we do this in caring, inclusive and community-driven ways? How can we care for ourselves in the process of our campaign?

## 7 Powerful communication

How can we shape compelling campaign messages, and communicate our campaign clearly?

## 8 Powerful actions

What resources, coalitions, strategies and tactics can we draw on?

## 9 Learning and iterating

How do we learn and reflect together?

## Collective Power and Care

Campaigning for change can be tough. Sometimes, the challenges to be overcome can feel overwhelming. A sense of urgency to create change can lead to a neglect of care for our personal and collective needs. When bringing a community together to campaign, it is important to recognise that we all have other things going on in our lives, and in the life of our communities, that affect how we show up in campaigning activity.

At times the data we may be dealing with also represents individual or collective trauma that hooks into or maps onto our own lived experience.


“In counterdata campaigns, it’s important to recognise that this data is often born from trauma – online abuse, traumatic births, or more generally being ignored and unheard.


People in communities can become connected through the process of data collection and analysis: by sharing their stories, by being seen, by recognising shared grief.

The process is about learning you are not alone, about receiving care, comfort and recognition. It is about being heard and validated. And it is about recognising strength and resilience, bringing resolution and joy, about building solidarity and positive action for their community.”

– Jeni Tennison, reflections on data campaigns design lab

Spending time on checking-in, building community bonds, and providing support to each other is not something we should see as a distraction from community campaigning. Building collective power may also require attention to the interpersonal domain of power within, and outside, of our communities.

 **Resources:** Campaign capacity-builders Act, Build, Change have produced a free training module on Collective Care for campaigners that invites reflection on approaches to centre care, address the ‘Noble Purpose Paradox’ and find boundaries in our work that create safety and care for ourselves and our communities.

 **Resource:** Trauma Informed Approaches to Data Collection provides guidance designed for evaluators on recognising and addressing the potential of trauma during data collection.


## Powerful Communication

Campaigns are fundamentally about communication. Taking the time to craft and frame effective messages can make all the difference to campaign success.

- **Framing** is the way a message is shared: What is emphasised? What is left unsaid?
- **Messaging** involves choice of words, images, stories, examples and statistics.

Powerful communication needs to consider the **audience** for each message, and the **actions** we want particular audiences to take.

The New Economy Organisation Network (NEON) provide training on developing campaign messaging and communication, and provide a [helpdesk service to support campaigns](#).

 **Read:** [Neon Spokesperson’s Handbook](#)

 **Read:** [Artificial Intelligence | A Messaging Guide](#)



### Case Study: See Me, Hear Me

Maternity Engagement Action (MEA) works to empower Black women in Birmingham to access clinically and culturally safe, compassionate and equitable maternity care. Since 2022 they have been exploring how to support Black women to generate and use their own data to improve perinatal care in their [See Me, Hear Me](#) project.

The group’s process started with a series of open and vulnerable conversations in which the Maternity Ambassadors for Change (MACs) – a group of local women with lived experience of the maternal health system in Birmingham – were able to name and address their distrust and scepticism of research “done to” rather than “with” them. This enabled the group to explore how certain kinds of research could have traumatic impacts on the community and to begin to explore alternative research paradigms and approaches to working with data.

As part of this journey, the MACs became more familiar with Black feminist research methodologies, describing their journey of “*moving from an understanding of data as something that must be handled with ‘distance’, ‘coldness’ and ‘objectivity’, to something that can be emotive and embracing of feeling.*” [1]

One outcome of this journey has been the group’s arrival at a series of seven principles and shared values, which prioritise the needs of Black mothers within maternal and reproductive health research. Among these principles is a focus on creating a safe container for conversations around data, exploring how interpreting and hearing others’ stories can be an opportunity to be seen, heard and validated by others experiencing similar challenges. In addition, there has been a focus on adopting an *intentionally trauma-informed approach to their process*, including creating space for extensive reflection on their emotional and embodied responses to working with data, and integrating Sankofa healing practices which emphasise grounding, embodiment and wellbeing from an African-centred perspective. On a practical level, an emphasis on care has also meant centring the needs and agency of Black mothers, and being intentional about holding research workshops when it most suited the group – sometimes late into the evening and on weekends, with babies on chests and older siblings in tow.

Just as important as their final outputs and campaigning work has been the sense of affirmation and healing that has emerged out of the See Me Hear Me process of holding conversations about data in community.

Source: [1]

## Powerful actions

Getting your campaign message across may take a wide range of different tactics. Recognising that **all campaigns are data campaigns** think about the full range of campaign tactics you could use.

The [Beautiful Trouble Toolbox](#) contains over 30 different campaign tactics groups have used to call for social change, from protests and petitions, to legislative theatre, meme-making and media stunts.



### Activity: Campaign Tactics Brainstorm

Invite your group to think about (non-data-related) campaigns that have inspired them. It could be a campaign from history, a campaign they have been involved in, or a current campaign. Ask people to think about the different actions or tactics the campaign used.

- Go around the group asking people to briefly share their campaign inspiration.
- Collect a list of all the different kinds of tactics and actions mentioned.
- Reflect on whether any of these could be relevant for a campaign on data.

## Developing campaign plays

In American Football, a 'play' is "a close-to-the-ground plan of action or strategy that guides the team" and helps move the ball forward down the field. A campaigning 'play' is an action that can help move the campaign forward. Reaching your campaign goal might involve a number of plays: both proactive and defensive. A 'data play' guides your data team in implementing a set of tactics that can create change to data practices.



## Activity: Designing Data Plays

The [designing data plays worksheet](#) outlines a process for brainstorming different tactics and thinking about:

- The 'targets' for each tactic: who are you seeking to influence?
- Who is mobilised by each tactic: how are you involving community?
- How tactics fit together to build power and towards campaign success.

**Play title:** Research > Petition > Debate

### Tactic 1

#### PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

We run peer-research workshops to gather stories of how current data collection and analysis negatively affect our community.

**Targets:** Decision makers & Community

**Mobilises:** Engaged community members

### Tactic 2

#### PETITION

Drawing on research findings, we petition the government for a debate on changing how data is collected.

**Targets:** Politicians

**Mobilises:** Community & Neutrals

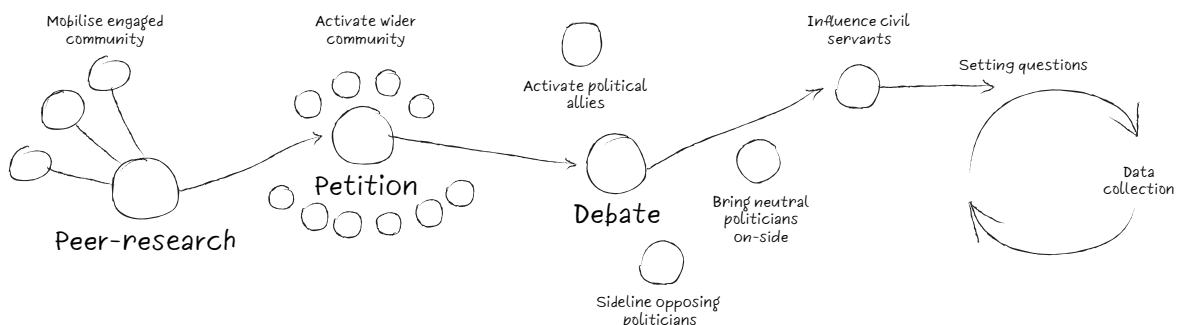
### Tactic 3

#### DEBATE

We brief friendly politicians and use our social media to amplify the debate. We use quotes from the debate in engagement with civil servants in charge of data collection.

**Targets:** Civil servants / Media

**Mobilises:** Politicians (Allies)



## Learning and iterating

Community campaigns need regular moments to reflect, learn and adapt.

- **Retrospectives** are widely used in software and data projects to reflect on a period of work, celebrate progress, identify challenges, and map out potential changes in future.
- Running a retrospective session after major campaign actions can be a useful way to capture learning from across the group and think about adaptations needed for upcoming plans.
- The [Ultimate Guide to Retrospectives](#) provides detailed information on the what, why and how of retrospectives. [Fun Retrospectives](#) has a library of ideas for different activities that can help teams reflect on their work.
- **Evaluation** can take many forms, though it will usually involve assessing progress and activities over time against an agreed framework.
- The [Act by Right](#) workbook contains a section on evaluation that encourages groups to think about the kinds of evaluation that might be right for their campaign.



## Appendix

**Campaign:** Behind Our Screens

**Interest area:** Online safety for young people

**Website and video**

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**Campaign:** Care Full

**Interest area:** Shifting the economy to recognise acts of care

**Website and video**

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**Campaign:** Just Treatment

**Interest area:** Patient-led campaign on health data

**Website and video**

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**Campaign:** London Renters Union

**Interest area:** Tackling poor transparency of rental data

**Website**

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**Campaign:** See Me. Hear Me.

**Interest area:** Seeking to ensure the voices and experiences of Black perinatal women are centred in how data is collected about them

**Website and video 1 and video 2**

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Developed as part of the **CONNECTED BY DATA** 'Catalysing Community Campaigns' project generously supported by a grant from Luminate.

## Acknowledgements

This toolkit was written by Tim Davies with input from Jeni Tennison, Adam Cantwell-Corn, Helena Hollis, Emily Macaulay, Tamanda Walker and Elinor Carmi. Based on a design lab co-facilitated by Dirk Slater (Fabriders), and cohort process involving inputs from the Co-production Collective, New Economy Organisers Network and our cohort participants (listed below). With thanks also to our design lab participants who helped test a number of activities contained within this toolkit: Tamanda, Amanda, Anna, Joana, Roshni, Tosca, Lydia, Julia, Nick, Frida, Roxy, Hope, Hannah and Ruth.

Thanks also to Luminate Strategic Initiatives for the funding that enabled this work.

**CONNECTED BY DATA's 2024** 'Community Campaigns on Data' cohort

## Find out more

Connected by Data are developing resources to help organisations embed participatory, democratic and deliberative approaches to governing data and AI in their work. To find out more, get in touch via [www.connectedbydata.org](http://www.connectedbydata.org)

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