



How to grow a petition

There are two types of petitions: e-petitions (online) or paper petitions (offline). You can choose to go with either, depending on what resources you have, which you feel will be most likely to attract signatures (for example, if most of the people you're trying to get support from are young then an online petition may make more sense) and where you plan to promote it (at events an offline petition makes more sense). Councils may accept a paper petition and an e-petition at the same time if you wish to do both. Just make sure that both the online and offline versions are identical so that signatures are totalled rather than counted separately.

Before setting up a petition make sure to check the petition policy of your council. Some councils will have specific conditions associated to petitions. For example, many councils will only accept petitions signed within a certain time period (e.g. 1 month). If these conditions aren't met then your council may not accept your petition so make sure you are clear on what you need to do. In addition, the majority of councils will set thresholds for the number of signatures needed to trigger certain actions, such as holding a full council debate. Finding out how many signatures you need will help you know what to aim for. Here is an example of council guidelines on setting up a petition: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/petitions

Online tips

Many councils have an online petition system on their website, which is the best place to set up a petition as it goes straight to your council and they are obliged to monitor it. If they do not have an online system, you can set up a petition on another platform such as www.change.org or www.avaaz.org. You will then have to send your council the e-petition signatures you collect.

1. Share your petition on Twitter, Facebook and other social media channels

Social media is a really powerful tool, so post your petition far and wide. Make sure to use hashtags (by putting '#' before the word) to reach more people. This useful resource from MoveOn gives you more information on how to promote your petition on Twitter: petitions.moveon.org/howto_twitter.html.

2. Send emails to your friends and family urging them to sign. And ask them to share the petition with their contacts

Send an email round to your friends and family urging them to sign your petition. You can also ask them to share it on social media or forward your email on to their contacts. Telling people the target for the number of signatures you're trying to collect will help to motivate them. Your target will depend on how large your area is or the number of signatures your council requires to force action.

3. Send updates to people who have signed your petition to keep them engaged

By sending regular updates on how your campaign is progressing or other news about pesticides, people will feel a part of the cause and be more likely to share it with others. You can create a mailing list using the email addresses of signatories who have consented to be contacted. Updating people on how many signatures you still need, may inspire them to help you more.



4. Post the link in the comments of related news articles, blog posts and social media conversations

Blogs and news sites can help get your petition in front of a new audience. Where possible, post an explanation of your petition and a link to it into the comments section underneath relevant news articles and blogs. Given that your petition is local, this will be particularly effective on websites focusing on your area.

You can also try searching on twitter for hashtags relevant to the topic or location of your petition (for example #pesticides, #pesticidefree, #Brighton). This is a good way to find other people who care about the issue to tell about your petition.

5. Share your petition with local organisations

Ask local organisations to share your petition on social media- they may have big audiences.

6. Put a link to your petition in your email footer

Have an email footer? Put the link there and grab people's attention whenever you send an email.

Offline tips

To submit an offline petition, you should send it to your council by post. There are different ways of collecting offline signatures - you can collect them on one sheet with a table, or you can create individual postcards which you leave for people to sign and then collect.

1. Door to door

Whilst door knocking isn't always fun, face-to-face interaction is often the most effective tool for gaining people's support for your cause. The added value is that you will be informing your neighbours of what is happening in their town/city as they might not be aware, and you can get to know them in the process!

2. Leave petition sheets in local shops and other businesses or communal spaces

Ask local shopkeepers and other business owners if they will put your petition in their shop (e.g. on their counter, in a window or on a notice board) and encourage people to sign it when they come in. Make sure to target businesses that will be sympathetic, for instance an organic shop or small business is much more likely to say yes than a chain. You can even ask them if you can spend an hour in their shop with the petition to ask customers to sign. Do also try non-commercial public spaces such as allotments, community centres, libraries and religious buildings.

3. Take the petition to local meetings and events

Local food market? Community fayre? Take the petition along. These are great places to get supporters. You can also ask to speak at meetings of like-minded local groups e.g. Friends of Parks, Extinction Rebellion, allotment groups, beekeeping groups etc.

4. Target your local media

Get in touch with your local news outlets (newspapers, local radio) to ask them if they would like to cover your campaign to make your town/city pesticide-free. Give a quote or an interview making sure to tell people how to support your campaign, including where to find your petition. This tactic can also work well for promoting an online petition.

PAN UK has an offline petition template for you to use. Download it from our website and adapt it to fit your local campaign, making sure it meets the petition criteria set by your local council. Visit www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free



It doesn't have to be this way...

Help PAN UK make our towns and cities pesticide-free

