



# Take action

Your guide to  
campaigning on  
mental health



Rethink  
Mental  
Illness.

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**“Be brave. Have faith. Believe that the future can be better than the present and that you have the power to make it so.”**

**Becky, Rethink Mental Illness Campaigner**



# What is campaigning?

**Campaigning is about creating a change that has a positive impact on people's lives.**

It can be anything from signing a petition or attending a meeting to running your own local campaign. Campaigning can mean anything from trying to change a policy, influence a decision, change people's behaviour or raise awareness about an issue.

The idea of embarking on a campaign can be quite daunting. That is why we have created this guide to take you through from start to finish helping you have the best chance of success while avoiding common pitfalls. **This guide is a tool to help you, but remember, you are the expert in your own experience and you can take a lot of confidence from that.**

Find out more about our campaigns at [www.rethink.org/campaign](http://www.rethink.org/campaign) and you can download further resources from [www.rethink.org/campaignlibrary](http://www.rethink.org/campaignlibrary)



Did you know the word 'campaign' comes from the French word 'campagne' and was used as a military term to gain land advantage?

# Getting started

## DECIDE YOUR AIM

It can be difficult to know where to start when you plan your campaign. Start by **working out what you are trying to achieve**. It may seem very obvious but you would be amazed at how many campaigns (even well-funded ones) fail because they don't start with a clearly defined goal!

Think about what's wrong with the current or proposed situation and what would resolve this. Keep examining this until you are certain you have an aim or objective which is **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound).

**Example:** To have 20% more beds in recovery houses in Harrow by this time next year.

## Top Tip!

Write your aim down and keep this in mind throughout the rest of your campaign.

## DECIDE ON YOUR CAMPAIGN

**The campaign target is the person(s) or organisation that can make the change your campaign is calling for.**

The target could range from the general public, health professionals, the people who set budgets, the local council or your MP. It can be difficult to decide who the best target is and there may sometimes be more than one. Look back at your aim and think *who has the power to make this change happen?*

It could be the person directly in charge of making the decision, or someone who has an influence over the decision. And one target may influence or be influenced by another – for example public support might shift the views of a politician.

Sometimes this is referred to as “pulling the right lever”. Take time to think about what it is that will compel your campaign target to take the action.

### Keep in mind

Who are your current supporters, who else might support the campaign and who might oppose it? How you talk about the campaign might need to change for these different audiences.

## WHO'S WHO?

**MPs** are elected to the Westminster parliament every five years (650 across the UK with 533 in England). Although they are not directly in charge of local decisions they can be very influential over areas such as the local NHS, council and other organisations. You can contact them about issues you are having with a service, welfare benefits or other local situations. You can, of course, also ask your MP to pass on your local concerns within parliament or influence national policies in parliament. MPs generally hold surgery visits in their constituency; you can ask to visit one of these or to have a one to one meeting them to discuss your issue.

You can contact different campaign targets through our online tool at [www.rethink.org/contactthem](http://www.rethink.org/contactthem)

**Councils (also known as Local Authorities)** are responsible for running locally based services such as social care, mental health services for children & young adults and housing for people in need.

**Councillors** are elected to represent local areas in the Council (these areas are called 'wards'). Councillors can influence health and social care services, housing providers, police and other local organisations. Councils often hold public meetings that you can attend.

**Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)** are groups of GPs and other health professionals who decide what health services should be available in each local area. Every year the Government gives CCGs a total budget for how much they can spend on services, and often guidance on how best to do this. It is, however, down to each local CCG to decide how to spend their budget, which includes mental health services. They are obliged to take into account the needs of people in the local area when deciding on how to spend their budget, and should run consultations that you can take part in.

**Mental Health Trusts** are NHS organisations providing health and sometimes social care services to people affected by mental illness. Services may include talking therapies, community and family support, general health screening, social workers and sometimes return-to-work support. Most of these will be paid for (aka commissioned) by CCGs.

**Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs)** are local forums of key people across health and social care who work together to integrate these two sectors. Each Council will have a Health and Wellbeing Board. They produce a joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) to identify key health and social care priorities for the community. With this they should produce a joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy to shape local services.

**The minimum membership of a Board is:**

- A representative from each local CCG covered by the HWB.
- The Directors of both Adult and Children Social Services.
- The local Director of Public Health.
- A representative from local Healthwatch.
- A local Councillor.

**Healthwatch** is an independent organisation that is responsible for ensuring that the concerns of people using health and social care services are raised with providers and commissioners.

*Who do you think might be your campaign target(s)? You can also use this space to write down your supporters and your opponents.*

# Build your evidence base

Your expertise in your own experience and the experiences of others is the main source of information for your campaign. However to gain support from your campaign target you may also need some facts and figures! That is why it is important to have evidence to back up your campaign. This could be pre-existing legislation, data or research.

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND WHAT YOU'RE ENTITLED TO

It is important that you know your rights. Below is some information on how you can find out about your rights.

### National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

NICE is an independent organisation that uses evidence to create guidelines and quality standards for the NHS. These outline good practice to drive improvements in the quality of care for people living with certain health conditions. Even though these guidelines and standards are not compulsory for services, you can use them to provide a blueprint for what good services look like. Find out more at:

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

#### Access and waiting time standards

In 2015, the first rights to maximum waiting times for mental health services were introduced. At the moment, the access and waiting time standards only apply to people experiencing a first episode of psychosis or referrals to talking therapies. This means:

- More than 50% of people experiencing a first episode of psychosis will be treated with a NICE-approved care package within 2 weeks.
- 75% of people referred to talking therapy will be treated within 6 weeks of referral.

However, it has been promised that further access and waiting time standards will be introduced by 2020 for all mental health services.

### Choice of health provider

People who use mental health services have the legal right to choose their mental healthcare provider and care team when they are referred by a GP. Within this, people can also choose a named mental healthcare professional for their care. NHS Choices allows you to search local services: [www.nhs.uk/service-search](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search)

## KNOW YOUR DATA

Strong research and clear evidence that backs up your campaign is key to success. We know mental health data isn't the most reliable, readily accessible or easy to understand. So if you run into problems feel free to get in touch with us on [campaigns@rethink.org](mailto:campaigns@rethink.org)

In the meantime here are some good places to start:

- **Your local Clinical Commissioning Group's** (CCG's) annual reports
- The **Mental Health Trust's** quality account report
- **Healthwatch** – [www.healthwatch.co.uk](http://www.healthwatch.co.uk)
- **Government statistics** – [www.gov.uk/government/statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics)
- **Care Quality Commission** – you can find information on how the NHS is performing in local areas and read their major publications and surveys. [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)
- **Severe Mental Illness Profiling Tool** – designed by the Mental Health Intelligence Network. This allows you to see how your own local area measures up against others. [www.bit.ly/21eeFqV](http://www.bit.ly/21eeFqV)
- **RSA data** – this allows you to see how mental health impacts on physical health and see how your area compares to the average. [www.bit.ly/1ND34Yz](http://www.bit.ly/1ND34Yz)

- **The National Audit of Schizophrenia (NAS)** – [www.bit.ly/1R4bZaP](http://www.bit.ly/1R4bZaP)
- **NHS England** – [www.england.nhs.uk/statistics](http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics)
- **Health and Social Care Information Centre** – [www.hscic.gov.uk](http://www.hscic.gov.uk)
- **Google Scholar** – [www.scholar.google.co.uk](http://www.scholar.google.co.uk)

## WHERE THERE IS NO DATA, GO LOOKING FOR IT!

Sometimes the information you might need won't be publically available. **The Freedom of Information Act (FOI)** gives everyone the right to request and access information held by any public body. You can only make a Freedom of Information request if the information you want isn't already available to the public.

To request information, write to the organisation and clearly explain the information you want and how you would like to receive the response. They must then respond to you within 20 working days – unless they let you know that they need more time. FOI requests are generally free, however, in some cases you may be required to pay a small fee to cover administration costs.

An organisation can refuse your FOI request and not disclose the information you sought in the following situations:

- It would cost them more than £450 (or £600 for central Government) to find this information.
- The information is not available.
- The information contains personal or commercially sensitive information.

**For more information on FOIs visit:**  
[www.whatdotheyknow.com](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com)

## Remember!

You are the expert in your experience. Sharing your personal stories with others is really empowering and influential. You could even gather stories of others' experiences or run a local survey.

What information do you already have and what information would be helpful for you to get? How can you get this information?

*"I have made a number of FOI requests, including how much CCGs are actually spending on mental health.*



*NHS England officials were extremely helpful, and very promptly clarified a number of detailed queries I made. I used the information to ask some tough questions to my local CCG at a recent public meeting. Anyone can ask searching questions of Ministers, Government and the NHS, and I find that very empowering."*

**Roger, Rethink Mental Illness Campaigner**

# Choose your campaign tactics

Your campaign aim will influence your choice of campaign tactics. Does your campaign need to drum up a lot of local support or does it need to happen behind closed doors? Is there already a formal process or consultation that you could engage with?

## MAKE CONTACT WITH YOUR CAMPAIGN TARGET

To achieve your aim you might simply have to make contact with your campaign target; be it through an email, a letter, a phone call or meeting them. There might already be ways to do this, for example, through public consultations or meetings, surgery visits with your MP or committees that you can join.

If there isn't already a way for you to contact your campaign target then you can contact them directly. This is something you can do by yourself or as part of a group. You could even invite your campaign target to visit your group or help them meet with others who are passionate about your cause.

MPs are there to represent you, and other organisations (such as CCGs) are obliged to involve you in local decisions. This means you have every right to contact them, so don't take no for an answer!

**You can contact MPs, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Councillors, Council health leads and Health & Wellbeing Boards via our online tool at [www.rethink.org/contactthem](http://www.rethink.org/contactthem)**

**We also have resources to support you when writing or meeting with your campaign target [www.rethink.org/campaignlibrary](http://www.rethink.org/campaignlibrary)**

*"I went along to the Rethink Mental Illness Activist event earlier this year and was keen to set up a meeting with my local MP. I knew that there would be a change in the MP for my area as the previous MP was retiring; I felt that this was a great opportunity to work with a new and passionate person... I left the office feeling elated and really proud of myself. It wasn't an easy thing for me to do but it was 100% worth the nerves and anxiety."*

**Lizzie, Rethink Mental Illness Campaigner**

## Remember!

- Keep your letter or email to one side of paper or less.
- Include your contact details.
- Keep a copy of all correspondence.
- Chase up your letter 2 weeks after sending it.
- Before speaking to your target, make a note of the key things you want to say and anything you wish to leave out.
- Keep notes from any conversations you have.
- Be clear about what you want your target to do.
- Follow up!



## PETITIONS

If you need to raise awareness of your campaign, a petition might be ideal. They are a great way to get the attention of your campaign target and they give a voice to people who don't usually speak out.

**Electronic petitions** are very easy to set up and can reach large numbers of people. There are various different petition websites such as [www.change.org](http://www.change.org), [www.38degrees.org.uk](http://www.38degrees.org.uk) and [www.petition.parliament.uk](http://www.petition.parliament.uk).

**Paper petitions** are very effective for local issues and can run alongside an electronic petition. Hit the streets with a paper petition and you could get hundreds of signatures in no time! It will also give you a chance to talk to people about your campaign.

## Tips for running a petition

- Include enough information for people signing it.
- Use a personal story.
- Direct your petition to a specific person or organisation.
- Have a clear action or ask for the target of the petition.
- Find out how your target usually responds to petitions.
- Inform the press about your petition once it has some signatures.

### Example: Sign now and demand that 'Sunny Road Community Health Centre' is kept open.

We, the undersigned, believe it is wrong that to close down 'Sunny Road Community Health Centre'. Many people in our community rely on this service to provide vital support for people affected by mental illness.

This petition asks you to do an Equality Impact Assessment of the closure of this service and reconsider your decision. For more information about this campaign please contact XXXX.

Full Name	Signature	Address	Email/Phone

## HIT THE STREETS

One way to really show that your campaign is important to the local community is to take it to the streets. You could organise a march, demonstration or even a stunt such as a flash mob. These can be great ways to get public support and raise the profile of your campaign with your campaign target. They are great fun too!

*"It was a great experience and day, filled with fun dancing, art and lots of community and mental health involvement. Really good to feel part of the community working together towards a common goal of wellbeing and mental health awareness."*

**Natalie, Chester Rethink Mental Illness Support Group**

## Our top tips

- Check with your local council about any forms you might need to fill in.
- Notify the police at least 6 days in advance.
- Have a designated first aider.
- Put some people in high visibility jackets.
- Get someone on a megaphone.
- Make signs and placards.
- Notify the local press.
- Take pictures.
- Get on social media!

# Get public support

Not all campaigns need public support. However, most campaigns benefit from having as much public support as possible. This can be really easy with sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as well as through newspapers and local radio.

## GET ONLINE

Online sites are great to find new supporters, advertise events and provide more information. You can also build relationships with other people and organisations that will be able to help and support the campaign.

### What to do online:

- Create a page on Facebook.
- Create your own Twitter account. Instagram can also be useful.
- Set up events on Facebook and ask people to share them.
- Post regularly with updates and related information to keep your followers engaged.
- Reach out to your campaign target.
- Report back about campaign successes.
- Retweet or share any relevant posts by other people or organisations.
- Use images.
- Share personal stories relevant to the campaign.
- Vlog or create videos.

## CONTACT THE MEDIA

Speaking out in the media can be very empowering. People who have direct experience of mental illness are the experts and need to be heard. Remember your campaign target will be reading newspapers and listening to the radio as well, so the media attention you get can influence them as well!

### Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper

If you see something in a newspaper that you disagree with, or you have an opinion on, you can write a letter to the editor. If it gets published it can then open up discussions and raise awareness with the readers.

## Remember!

- **Keep it short and snappy (under 200 words).**
- **Get to the main point in the first two sentences.**
- **Use short, direct sentences.**
- **State why readers will be affected by the issue.**
- **Focus on one issue.**
- **Avoid jargon or acronyms.**
- **Don't use all capital letters or bold text to emphasise a word.**

*"I would definitely encourage other people to speak out in the media. I originally did it because I wanted to raise awareness of mental health issues for Rethink Mental Illness, and to help other people, but it actually turned out to be good for me in a selfish way! It made me feel better and good about myself."*

**Lorraine, Rethink Mental Illness Media Volunteer**

## Write a Press Release

If you want to get an article in the newspaper it is best to send out a press release to your local papers. A press release tells a journalist what your story is at a glance. They will get hundreds of press releases a day, so you need yours to stand out!

Make sure you catch their attention in the first few lines and that your press release is no longer than one side of A4. Keep in mind that if it does get published it will be edited to suit the paper's needs.



## Example of a press release

### For immediate release

## Birmingham community activist wins mental health award

**14th November 2015 – A community activist from Birmingham has been given an award by the national charity Rethink Mental Illness for his work to improve attitudes to mental illness.**

Steven Gilbert has been announced winner of the Janey Antoniou award for his passion and commitment to improving the lives of people living with mental illness.

Steven said, "I feel blessed to have achieved a level of recovery and believe it is important to speak openly about my experiences of living with mental illness to help educate others and reduce the stigma within my community."

The Janey Antoniou award, set up by Rethink Mental Illness, is named after a well-known mental-health campaigner and researcher who died in 2010. The award was presented by Janey's family to Steven along with a prize of £1000 at the Rethink Mental Illness National Members' Day.

Steven was recognised for his efforts to speak out and highlight mental health issues among young African Caribbean men and his involvement in the Time to Change to Change project '300 Voices', aimed at improving outcomes for young African Caribbean men with mental illness.

"I'm honoured to have been chosen as winner of the Janey Antoniou award and will use this as an opportunity to share my reality of living with a mental illness, the good and the bad, to fight for parity of esteem and to reduce stigma" said Steven.

Steven has also recently been appointed to the West Midlands Mental Health Commission working alongside Norman Lamb and Geraldine Strathdee to assess the scale of the impact of poor mental health on the lives of people living in the region.

**ENDS**

## Get on the radio

Local radio stations are a good platform for you to talk about your campaign. They like to share stories about local people or information that will have an impact on their listeners. This means it can be fairly easy to get some air time for your issue.



## Top tips

- Try to relax.
- Keep your language simple and to the point.
- If you make a mistake it's ok to correct yourself.
- Stick to your messages.
- Think ahead about what you don't want to discuss.
- Think about the types of questions they might ask you, and plan what your answers will be. You can even ask for questions in advance.
- Your interview may be edited so what you say may not be final.
- Remember, you are the expert! Take confidence from that.

*Do you need to make your campaign public? If so, how will you do this?*

## FIND SUPPORTERS

Local groups, organisations and meeting places are great to find local supporters and link with others in the community. Why not start by:

- Seeing if there is a Rethink Mental Illness group or service near you [www.rethink.org/services-groups](http://www.rethink.org/services-groups)
- Contacting other local mental health services and groups.
- Your mental health trust.
- Local cafes and shops.
- Community centres.
- Jobcentres.
- Healthwatch.
- Local Patient Participation Groups (through your CCG).
- Other local groups such as faith groups or parent groups.
- Looking for groups on [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com) and other online sites.

# Evaluate your campaign

Evaluating your campaign is one of the most important steps, and people often miss it out! Take time to take a step back and assess how well your campaign is achieving your aim. Should you change your tactics or how you talk about the campaign?

Evaluating or monitoring throughout a campaign can help keep you on track. If you jot down the key things you've learnt at the end of a campaign as well, it will help you with any future campaigning you do! It also gives you something to feed back to your supporters.

## **If you have won your campaign**

Firstly, tell everyone that has supported and helped you throughout the campaign. Why not try to get some media coverage as well? Then keep monitoring the issue as, once you have won a campaign, further changes can slip by without you noticing.

## **If you have lost your campaign**

Don't worry, this is an opportunity to learn and doesn't mean you won't achieve your aim. Use this opportunity to work out what went wrong and the lessons you have learned from this. Keep this in mind whilst you plan your next move.

Remember to thank your supporters and everyone who has helped you throughout your campaign!

*What are the main things you have learnt from this (or previous) campaigns?*

# Contact details and further information

## Campaigns Team

You can find out more about the campaigns team or get in touch with us using the information below.

[www.rethink.org/takeaction](http://www.rethink.org/takeaction)  
(for this guide and our campaigner videos)

[www.rethink.org/campaign](http://www.rethink.org/campaign)  
(for information on our campaigns)

[www.rethink.org/campaignlibrary](http://www.rethink.org/campaignlibrary)  
(for further campaigning resources)

Email: [campaigns@rethink.org](mailto:campaigns@rethink.org)  
Telephone: 020 7840 3147

## Other useful websites

For Freedom of Information Requests  
[www.whatdotheyknow.com](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com)

For information on MPs and Government  
[www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)

Shelia McKechnie Foundation  
[www.smk.org.uk](http://www.smk.org.uk) for training courses in campaigning.

For creating your own online petitions  
[www.38degrees.org.uk](http://www.38degrees.org.uk)

NCVO campaign pages  
[www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/campaigning](http://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/campaigning)

Healthwatch England  
[www.healthwatch.co.uk](http://www.healthwatch.co.uk)

Parliament's website  
[www.parliament.uk/about](http://www.parliament.uk/about)

## Media Team

Email: [media@rethink.org](mailto:media@rethink.org)  
Telephone: 020 7840 3138

## Fundraising Team

Email: [events@rethink.org](mailto:events@rethink.org)  
Telephone: 020 7840 3040

## Advice & Information Service

A confidential service providing advice and information on life with mental illness.

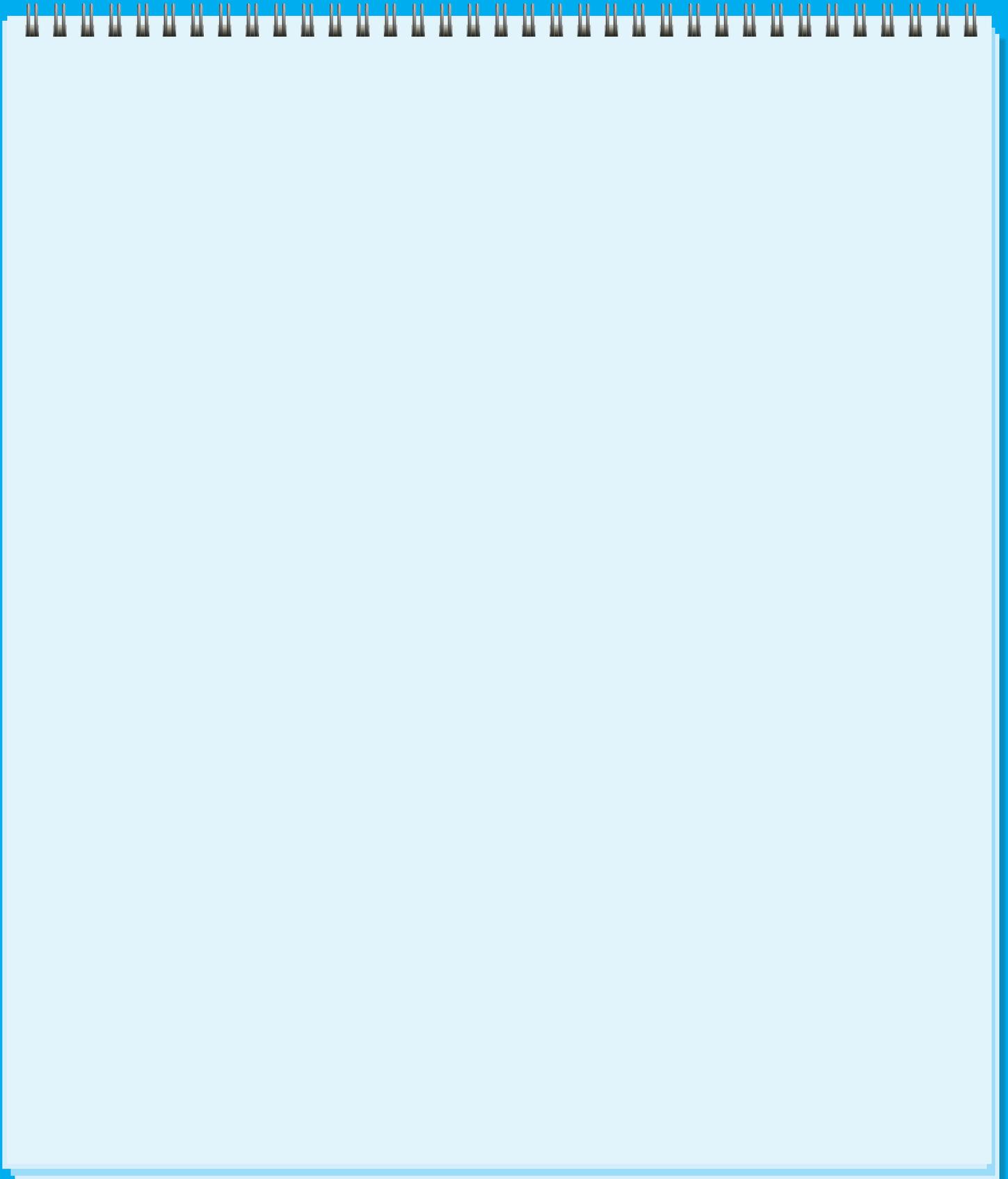
Email: [advice@rethink.org](mailto:advice@rethink.org)

Telephone: 0300 5000 927  
Monday to Friday, 10am – 2pm.

Or you can check out our factsheets online at [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

You can write to us at:  
Rethink Mental Illness  
15th Floor, 89 Albert Embankment,  
London, SE1 7TP

**Use this space for any other notes as you plan your campaign.**



Rethink Mental Illness is a charity that believes a better life is possible for millions of people affected by mental illness. For more than 40 years we have brought people together to support each other. We run services and support groups across England that change people's lives and we challenge attitudes about mental illness.



Rethink  
Mental  
Illness.

Leading the way to a better  
quality of life for everyone  
affected by severe mental illness.

For further information  
on Rethink Mental Illness  
Phone 0121 522 7007  
Email [info@rethink.org](mailto:info@rethink.org)



[facebook.com/rethinkcharity](https://www.facebook.com/rethinkcharity)



[twitter.com/rethink\\_](https://twitter.com/rethink_)



[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

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Rethink Mental Illness is a partner in:

**time to change**  
let's end mental health discrimination