

A guide to working together for Student, Youth and Local Groups

Student, Youth and local groups can be very effective by working closely together, plus it's fun and rewarding to do so. More volunteers can be found and ideas can be shared between the two types of groups. Joint campaigns and events reach more people and make Amnesty much more visible in the community. This guide on student and local groups working together has the aim of helping this collaboration to become successful, and reap better rewards for everyone involved. Working together can take different forms, but usually the most successful endeavours are when an event or project is planned together as equals, right from the outset. By sharing ideas and resources this collaboration amplifies the output whilst minimising the input from single participants within any event or project. We hope that you find this guide useful, and we look forward to receiving feedback on the different ways that you come together, so that we can build and adapt this advice.



Student, youth and local groups come together annually with other activists at the AGM.

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Section 1: Introducing Amnesty Local Groups

There are more than 285 local groups across the UK. Local or community-based groups take part in a wide range of activities and as such they are often the local face of Amnesty International.



Dundee Group of Amnesty International

Key facts about local groups

- Local groups carry out a wide range of activities from campaigning on individuals to raising money for human rights. They often meet once a month in addition to organising other activities, such as Letter writing and other forms of action on behalf of individuals whose rights have been abused.
- Raising awareness about human rights through your local press
- Organising events and stalls and getting involved in local activities such as festivals
- Lobbying MPs and MEPs to hold the government to account on human rights
- Campaigning on the issues that matter to you, including women's rights, torture and individuals at risk
- Fundraising to support our work

Local groups generally comprise of adults, some of whom have been Amnesty activists for decades, some of whom have just joined. Sometimes students and young people also join local groups. Most groups meet in the evening, although day-time meetings are also not uncommon.

Local groups receive a monthly mailing (apart from in August and January) with campaign updates. In addition named members of the group are also on AIUK mailing lists for specific campaigns or as co-ordinators of case files for a prisoner of conscience. Some groups have subgroups who look at a specific campaign or Human Rights abuse in specific countries.

Section 2: Introducing Amnesty Student Groups

AIUK's Student Action Network comprises of over 100 student groups. Most of these groups are based in universities in the UK; the remainder are based in colleges where the majority of students are over 18.



Key facts about student groups

- Student groups meet every week
- They only meet during term-time. Term dates vary at different universities and colleges, but for most the academic year runs from September/October to May/June, with breaks for the Christmas and Easter holidays
- Student groups elect a new committee every year, normally in March or April. The vast majority of student groups are entirely student-led, but a few are supported by lecturers
- Their membership is very fluid and can change radically from year to year; a group can go from being a thriving society with many members one year, to just a couple of students struggling to keep the group going the next year.
- Most student groups are affiliated to their Student Union, and are bound by the SU's rules. For example, the SU will often stipulate the minimum number of people in the group, positions on the committee and the membership fee for the group. Student Unions usually provide insurance cover for affiliated groups, and some will offer grants and other funding, web pages and email addresses
- Student groups elect a Student Action Network (STAN) Committee every November at the annual AIUK Student Conference. STAN committee members represent different regions of the UK, providing advice and support to student groups in their regions. There is some similarity between their role and the role played by Regional Reps in the local group network. For more information on the STAN committee see here:
<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/meet-stan-student-action-network-committee#.VL0f8S7m7GB>

- Lots of Amnesty student groups work in collaboration with other university societies, such as Oxfam, People and Planet, Politics societies etc.
- Student groups compete in an annual fundraising competition called the Student Raise-Off. See here for more information: <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/fundraising-your-university#.VL0gnC7m7GA>



Montfort University Student Group. Credit Grant Copeland

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Section 3: Introducing Amnesty Youth Groups

Amnesty International UK has a vibrant network of over 500 groups. The vast majority are based in schools and colleges but over the years we've also had Amnesty youth groups as a part of Scout groups, Woodcraft Folk groups, youth clubs and home education groups (which is why we prefer to call them 'youth' groups as opposed to 'school' groups). We also have a number of groups that are affiliated to AIUK overseas in international or British schools as far afield as El Salvador, Malawi and Thailand!



Key facts about youth groups

- Most groups are a combination of teacher and student collaboration (though some are completely student-led or teacher-led).
- The membership of a youth group changes regularly and teachers can play a key role in keeping groups going every year.
- Most youth groups meet at least once a week either over lunch breaks or after school.
- Most group activities take place within the boundaries of the school or college. However some groups (mainly based in sixth forms) do activities outside of the school or college walls/grounds.
- Youth group campaigning is done during the academic year, with the busiest time being between September and April. In May and June youth groups tend not to be active due to exams but some groups pick up their activities over the last couple of weeks term in July.
- Just like local and student groups, youth groups do things like stunts, letter-writing. Fundraising events (cake sales are very popular), stalls and petitions
- Youth groups have the opportunity to reach hundreds of people in one go through assemblies. Many will do assemblies over the course of a week that will reach the entire school.
- Enabling young people to participate in all Amnesty activities is vital to our activism strategy – we have achieved a great deal so far in this respect through setting up a Youth Advisory Group and enabling young people to attend and vote at the AGM.
- Youth groups affiliate to us on an annual basis and pay a £21 membership fee. We ask them to renew every year so that we can be sure if the group is still active or not.
- The number of youth groups changes on a regular basis (sometimes daily!) basis.
- We ask for the details of an adult when groups affiliate even if the group is student-led so that we know that the school or college approves.
- Youth groups are supported through monthly mailings focussing on current campaigns or individuals at risk. They need to have enough material to sustain them over a month's worth of weekly meetings.
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Working with young people

What do we mean by a 'young person'?

Children and young people are considered by AIUK as anyone under the age of 18. However we appreciate there is quite a big difference between an 11 and 17 year old! For that reason, our Child Protection Policy generally distinguishes between over and under 16s, for example when it comes to parental permission to attend events

Making initial contact

- You can find a list of youth groups by region at: www.amnesty.org.uk/youth. These will be updated monthly. AIUK staff will be happy to provide contact details for youth groups by region on request. Please email student@amnesty.org.uk or call 0207 033 1596. We would recommend starting with an email and then a follow-up call.
- If you call the teacher and we only have a school or college number for them, the best times are lunchtimes or just after school. Try calling the school first to find out the timings of the school day.
- Don't be disheartened if you don't get an immediate response. Teachers are very busy and it can be tricky to get hold of them. However, gaining contact is entirely possible with a bit of effort and persistence!

- Having a specific aim for contacting them (a proposal or request as opposed to just a ‘hello’) will more likely result in a positive response.

Child protection and other guidance on working with young people

Child Protection Policy

A consequence of working more closely with under 18s is the development of a **Child Protection Policy** – relevant elements of AIUK’s child protection policy are flagged up in this section. As I’m sure you are aware, child protection guidelines are as much for your own protection as for the protection of the young person, if you would like to read the policy document then please contact us at student@amnesty.org.uk

Direct contact with youth group members

Direct contact with youth group members

You should continue to hold a relationship with the group via the teachers if the members of the group are under 16. This also means that you are more likely to build a longer term relationship as the teacher tends to be the consistent point of contact for the group.

If you have direct contact with the youth group members who are between 16 and 18, here is some advice about appropriate communication.

- Avoid contact about anything other than Amnesty matters and avoid sending too much information.
- Communication should be short, to the point and relate to Amnesty matters.
- Avoid personal subject matter
- When emailing copy in other people such as other members of the youth group, your group, the teachers or the parents of the young person.

Going into schools

Have you been invited into a school?

- We encourage this and in fact youth groups have said that they would like local group members to go to their events more often. Sometimes local group members get asked to go to a school **without** a youth group and collect a cheque from a fundraising activity. This is also great (remember to mention setting up a youth group to them!).
- Just make sure that a teacher or other member of the school staff is always with you if you are visiting a school on behalf of AIUK – visitors should not be left alone with students.
- If you are invited by a youth group to run a workshop or do a talk then we recommend asking a local school speaker to run the session or to accompany a school speaker. Our school speakers are trained and have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau.

The School Speakers Scheme

If you want to pro-actively approach schools that don’t have youth groups then you will need to join our School Speaker Scheme. This is a network of approximately 150 speakers who are trained to go into schools to run workshops and give talks.

To find out more about the School Speaker Scheme:

- Call 0207 033 1596
- Email student@amnesty.org.uk
- Go to the website www.amnesty.org.uk/speakers

Taking photos of, or filming young people

It is always good practice to ask children and young people if they consent to their image being taken and used, and explain the possible uses for those images. In some cases, parental permission will also be required (see below). If there is any doubt about the age of the child/young person then caution should be exercised and parental permission sought. If there is a mixed age group it may be easier to get the parental consent for all. For public events where it is not possible to capture parental permission, then any invites or advertising material should state clearly that photography/filming will be taking place.

Under16s

- Parental permission should be sought to take and use images of children under the age of 16
- It will need to say what will happen to the pictures/film and what they will be used for. A template form is available for this.
- If pictures are taken or filming takes places informally at an event, then this can be covered in the general parental permission form mentioned in the previous section.
- If the young people are particularly young, group photographs are preferred than photographs of individual young people.

Over 16s

- 16-18 year olds should be asked if they mind before pictures are taken or filming takes place. This consent should be specific and include the purpose of taking the photographs and film, and the possible uses for which they may be used.
- They should also know how to withdraw consent should they change their mind later.

To withdraw consent after the event, parents or young people should contact
student@amnesty.org.uk

Content and context of images

- Ensure that images are appropriate for the activity being portrayed.
- Images of children/young people in distress should never be taken or used.
- Take care in the way that children/young people are dressed and posed for the photograph, consider taking head and shoulder shots if concerned.
- Avoid close-up pictures of very young individual children/young people. Where possible, instead use general shots of group activities.

Captions when using images

- Images could be used on websites where circulation is out of AIUK's control. Therefore only two pieces of identifiable personal information should be used together in captions as shown in the table below.

First Name	Last name	Location/school	Image
✓	✗	✓	✗
✓	✗	✗	✓

✓	✓	✗	✗
✗	✗	✓	✓

Reporting child abuse

If you suspect that a child or young person is being abused or neglected

- Informed the designated Child Protection Officer at AIUK straight away: Head of facilities Management on 0207 033 1538 or 07795 662033.
- Record and date and facts which support your suspicions.

If a child discloses to you that they have/are being abused by someone else

- Allow the child/young person to speak without interruptions, accepting what is said, but DO NOT investigate.
- Alleviate feeling of guilt and isolation, without passing judgement.
- Advise that: you will try to offer support, but you MUST pass on the information.
- Inform the designated Child Protection Officer.
- Record and date any facts as you know them.
- Do not make any promises to the child/young person
- Do not confront the alleged abuser.

If a child discloses to you in a school

- If a child discloses to you in a school then you should still listen to the child, but ensure that the teacher responsible for your session is informed.
- Ask the teacher for the use of a quiet room or office where you can listen to the child but can still be observed.
- Any concerns arising out of the disclosure should be reported through the Child Protection procedures of the school.

Section 5: Collaborations between different Groups

- Student, youth and local groups both receive different campaign mailings. During term time, student groups receive monthly mailings from the Student team and youth groups from the Youth team,, which focuses on a priority campaign. Local group mailings, on the other hand, can look quite different. Whereas local groups receive a single 'monthly action' to undertake in their group's monthly meeting, student and youth mailings contain lots of suggested actions for a particular campaign – enough to sustain them over a month's worth of weekly meetings. In this sense student and youth mailings are similar to 'Campaign Action Bulletins' (CABs') received by local groups.
- Normally the campaign focus of student and youth mailings aligns with the content of the monthly actions/CABs sent to local groups, e.g. one example is that one month all groups can be sent mailings on women's rights in Afghanistan, and the next month they will receive mailings on Zimbabwe and Torture.
- Country Coordinators have most direct contact with members of local group, but they are often more than happy to support youth and student groups as well

- The actions that are suggested to youth and student groups are very similar to those that local groups take, e.g. signing petitions, letter writing, lobbying MPs, photo stunts, media work etc. where appropriate we adapt actions to fit the university or school context, e.g. suggesting creative photo stunts that will work well on campus or during assemblies, and providing template press releases for student media.

Building an on-going relationship with a youth group

General points

- Again, having a specific aim in mind for your communication will help foster a longer term relationship with a youth group.

Top tip: Try to find common ground with another Amnesty group. Suggest you team up to hold a joint action or event on a campaign that both groups are already working on.



Birmingham Student Group Committee members Clara (left) and Hannah (right) petitioning for Stop Torture

Good examples of collaboration

- attending each other's events and weekly/monthly meetings are great ways to build links between groups

"The Hull local group came to our Secret Policeman's Ball and we went to a comedy night they did and helped on lots of fundraising events, including for the Lord Mayor when he picked Amnesty as a charity of the year"

Daisy Baldwin, former President of the Hull University Amnesty Group

- When organising a large-scale event, it's a great idea to team up with other groups in your area. The Mid-Warwickshire Amnesty group organised a fantastic march through Leamington Spa to mark Amnesty's 50th Anniversary, involving members of The Warwick University group as well as youth group members from local schools. They received lots of press coverage for the event, which referenced the range of ages of Amnesty supporters involved in the event.
- Lots of student and local groups joined forces to lobby their MPs on the arms trade treaty.

"I think the age gap has actually served to benefit both groups, as the wider ranging demographic provides more legitimacy to the cause. This worked particularly well with our Arms Trade campaign last year which we hope to replicate this year"

JP Kozah, Former president of the Exeter University Amnesty International Society



Representatives of the local group and student groups in Sheffield lobby Nick Clegg on the ATT

Top tip: be strategic with your communication. Remember that your contact person may be getting emails from Amnesty as an individual or network member as well as regular campaign communications so avoid sending too much general Amnesty information.

How to contact Amnesty groups in your area and to build an ongoing relationship

You can find a list of student groups arranged in alphabetical order at:

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/student-group-finder#.VL0soy7m7GA>

You can find a list of youth groups by region at: www.amnesty.org.uk/youth

A full list of all groups can be found here:

http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/list_of_all_groups_-_website.pdf

AIUK staff will be happy to provide the contact details for groups by region on request. Please email activism@amnesty.org.uk or call 0207 033 1596.

You can also find the Facebook pages for all student groups on the student group finder page above. Many student groups use Facebook as their main means of communication, but don't worry if you are not on Facebook – you can still reach them by phone or email too! Don't be disheartened if you do not get an immediate response to your initial contact. Students receive huge amounts of emails, so if you haven't had a response to an email then try giving them a call and leave a Voicemail if they do not answer.

Once you have established contact, we suggest adding each other –in case of over 18s- to your respective mailing lists. Many student groups send weekly e-newsletters to their members and often local groups also send out announcements or newsletters.. This is an easy way to stay in the loop with upcoming events/meetings and to spot opportunities for collaboration. Some groups have also found it useful to hold a joint meeting once per term to interact and plan projects.

Inviting Amnesty group members to events or meetings You may wish to invite members of other groups to an event that you are organising. If planning a joint event or project, it's often more fruitful to invite members to attend a specific meeting in order to plan a joint event or project, rather than a regular meeting.

When inviting youth members you'll need to adhere to the child protection policy as described above as well as to the safety guidelines below.

Making your meetings more accessible

- Do not assume prior knowledge. Avoid using jargon and Amnesty acronyms (or explain them if you do) or overly complex language. Some students may be new to Amnesty.
- Make sure that the venue is easily accessible by public transport and that the event doesn't finish too late.
- Make sure that the venue has disabled facilities.
- Try not to hold meetings in a venue that serves alcohol as there may be some people that want to attend who will not attend for religious or personal reasons if the meeting is held in a venue such as a pub or bar.
- Think about the timing of your meeting. Avoid university holidays or exam times.
- Structure your event so that it is interactive and has plenty of breaks.

- Make sure that the room is welcoming – make sure that the layout of tables and chairs isn't too formal or intimidating. Put up visual aids such as posters.
- Make sure that your meeting has a focus and outcome in mind.

Making your events safe and welcoming

- Ensure that young people are made to feel welcome at all AIUK events. Ensure that they know the names of at least one member of the group to whom they can speak or appoint a couple of buddies.
- Ensure that suitable refreshments are available and that it is easy for them to withdraw from any formal sessions.
- Respect a child's right to personal privacy.
- Respect the cultural, religious and ethnic background of the child/young person.
- Always treat children and young people with respect – don't embarrass them.
- Encourage children and adults to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like and ensure that these points are taken into account when organising current and future activities and events.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned, caution is required even in sensitive moments such as when young people are upset (if uncertain about how to offer reassurance or comfort ask the child or the young person and be guided by this)
- Plan your group or activities so that they involve more than one person being present or at least in sight and hearing of others. Occasionally there may be no alternative. If you need to work alone with a child or young person, remain in general view and not be hidden away behind closed doors.
- Pick materials carefully to make sure that they are suitable for a youth audience. Not all Amnesty International materials are suitable. For example, some may be too violent or have inappropriate sexual language.

Escorting or accompanying under 18s

- If escorting or accompanying young people (such as collecting them from houses or stations) two adults should be present at all times.
- Make sure that the parents of the young person are happy with the arrangements
- If using a private car ensure that it is roadworthy, taxed, insured and has an up to date MOT. Also ensure that any drivers hold a full driving licence and have full permission to drive the vehicle and that they are insured to do so.
- If using taxis then only use a licensed taxi company.

Parental permissions

- This is required for all young people under 16 years of age who are participating in events.
- Parental permission forms must explain the purpose of the event, the likely range of activities or materials to be used at the event, the likely mix of people in attendance (i.e. whether it is mainly for under 18s or adults), the likely level of supervision that will be available, any filming or picture taking likely at the event, transport to and from the event and any escorting or residential arrangements.
- Sample letters are available from AIUK which can be used for such instances.
- The permission form will also make clear if it is anticipated that alcohol will be available at the event and, if so. That under 18s will not be consuming it.
- Finally, the form must give a named contact to whom any concerns may be addressed
- If you have a young person under 16 regularly attending your local group meetings they will need to fill in one general consent form. Again, general consent forms are also available.

Moving on

Moving on from school

Local and student groups can play a key role in encouraging youth group members to stay involved with Amnesty after they leave their school or college.

Many universities and colleges have an Amnesty groups, and you may wish to mention this to youth group members.

If there is no Amnesty group at your local university or college, we can help you with setting one up! Our annual Freshers project runs from July to December, with three dedicated Freshers volunteers who will run stalls at Freshers fairs and first meetings for new groups. Please email freshers@amnesty.org.uk if you would like to work with the Freshers team in order to set up a new student group.

Moving on from education/university

If you know of student members who are staying in town after completing their studies or of any youth group members who are either not going on to university or are taking a gap year before they do, encourage them to stay involved by:

- Inviting them along to a local group meeting or event in order to give them a flavour of how your group operates and to encourage them to join. Just don't invite them during the exam period!
- Talking to them about what they intend to get out of joining your group and looking for a specific task/role for them to focus on should they wish to join.
- Encourage them to join as an individual member: www.amnesty.org.uk/giving/join/adult.

If you have any queries

Please call 0207 033 1596 or email activism@amnesty.org.uk

