



Local Groups' Handbook

How to Set-up and Run a Successful Local Group

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Objectives of The 99% Organisation

Goals of the movement

The overall goal of the 99% Organisation is extremely simple:

To end mass impoverishment peacefully.

Mass impoverishment is the process where, even as the economy continues to grow, most people find themselves getting poorer year on year. The pie gets bigger, but most people get smaller slices. As the book *99%* explains, mass impoverishment has taken hold in America year since 2000, and in the UK since 2010.

Without policy change, neither the US nor the UK will be recognisably the same kind of civilisation by 2050. The post-war social contract will have been rescinded and the middle class will be an endangered species.

The US and the UK may end up in 2050 looking a little like South Africa today: a small and immensely wealthy elite protected by high levels of private security form a population most of whom are living in or near poverty.

Key actions to end mass impoverishment

Chapter 15 of *99%* sets out five relatively straightforward actions needed to safeguard the post-war social contract and ensure that most people have a good prospect of a decent life. In brief, these are:

1. **A democratic reset** to ensure that governments act on behalf of the entire population not the most influential 0.01%
2. **Fact-based policy**, rather than the myth-based policy that has dominated in recent decades
3. **Policy design for abundance and solidarity** – growing the pie faster and sharing more fairly
4. **Investing wisely in the future** – rather than the underinvestment we have seen recently
5. **Creating clean, competitive markets** to ensure that the profit motive acts as a force for good in society.

Between them, these five actions will both end mass impoverishment and enable governments to tackle major challenges like climate change effectively.

The 99% Organisation aims to drive these actions.

Values

The 99% Organisation aims to end mass impoverishment peacefully. To that end, we have set out the following values.

We will...	We will not...
Be inclusive	Divide and rule
Use peaceful means	Use any form of violence
Use fact-based argument	Rely on or accept argument from authority
Tackle the myth robustly	Attack the person

And, of course, we will operate within the law.

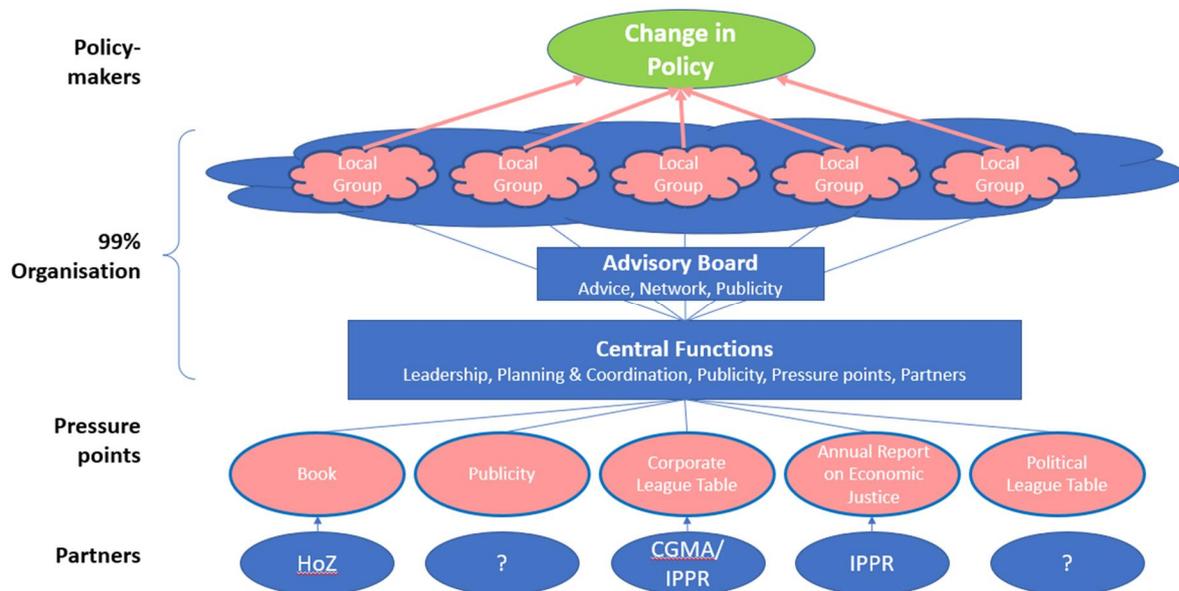
While we appreciate that not everyone who is concerned about mass impoverishment will wish to sign up to these values, if they do not, the 99% Organisation is not the home for them.

We believe that our legitimacy, and therefore our long-term success, depends on sticking to these values.

Structure and Roles

Overall architecture

The diagram below illustrates the overall architecture of what the 99% Organisation is setting out to build.



To achieve our overall goal, and to see the five actions mentioned above taken in reality, we need policymakers to change the law. Local Groups in as many constituencies as possible will ultimately be the key means by which individual policymakers – MPs and candidates for office – are persuaded to change their voting patterns.

But Local Groups, on their own, will often not be able to achieve a change in behaviour of this kind, so the organisation is also putting in place 'pressure points' which enable the Local Groups to apply more pressure to their local candidates. The pressure points so far identified are:

- the **book** 99% which presents the facts and the arguments in a way which will be compelling to many candidates;
- **publicity** around the book which helps to shift the public narrative and make mass impoverishment an issue which politicians dare not ignore;
- **corporate league tables** which highlight those companies which make the biggest positive contribution to society – and also those which make

the biggest negative contribution (e.g. by polluting the environment, avoiding their taxes, paying below a living wage, et cetera);

- working with the IPPR to produce an **Annual Report On The State Of Economic Justice** highlighting government progress (or lack of it) in tackling mass impoverishment;
- a **political league table** ranking MPs according to the extent to which their votes have helped tackle mass impoverishment or, alternatively, helped worsen it.

Not all of these pressure points are yet in place. Conversely, it is likely that others, not yet identified, will be created over time.

Role of the Centre

The 99% organisation is a voluntary organisation with a small central coordinating committee. This committee's key roles are leadership of the organisation; planning and coordination, including of the Local Groups; generating publicity; putting in place the pressure points; and developing relationships with strategic partners who can help us with these objectives.

The Centre is also aiming to assemble an Advisory Board of aligned individuals with strong public profiles and influential networks.

Role of the Advisory Board

The Advisory Board will have three key roles:

- providing strategic advice to the Centre;
- helping the organisation to maintain a high public profile;
- enabling the organisation to access politically influential individuals who might otherwise be difficult to reach.

Role of the Local Groups

Purpose and role of the group

Local Groups have two key roles: to spread the word as widely as possible in their own region; and over time, to position themselves to become influential with all political candidates, so that these candidates feel obliged to take the issue of mass impoverishment as seriously as it deserves.

Role of the Local Group Chair

The group Chair is responsible for guiding the group in such a way as to ensure:

- that members remain positive and engaged;
- that the values and objectives of the 99% Organisation remain uppermost in members minds;
- that the group is active in spreading the word and recruiting new members; and
- that, over time, the group becomes a force not to be ignored in its own region
- that the group shares its successes (and challenges) with other groups and the Centre so that the most effective strategies can be replicated across the organisation.

What sort of people are in the Local Groups?

All sorts of people join the Local Groups. We have members who are students, members are working and members who are retired. We have able-bodied members and members with disabilities. We have members whose expertise is in running businesses, members whose expertise is political, members with expertise in education, in banking and in economics. We have a huge diversity of skills and experience.

Getting started

Membership

To get started, you need a minimum of two members, one of whom has to be prepared to act as Chair, and both of whom subscribe to the values of the organisation and are prepared to engage in the activities described above.

On the assumption that there are only two of you on day one, the first task would be to explore your own networks to get a small but workable group of five or six who can meet to start planning.

Support

While you are getting started, you may well want to ask for support from another group, or from the Centre. If possible, we will try to arrange that somebody from another group or from the Centre can attend the first couple of meetings to help you get started.

And, even once you're established, if you have problems whose resolution is not straightforward, please do shout for help.

There are several resources you may find helpful for your Group on the [website](#).

Rules

The most important rule for Local Groups is to ensure that all group activities are in line with the values of the organisation.

Funding

As the organisation is a voluntary organisation, funded (to date) from royalties on the sale of book 99%, the Centre is not in a position to provide financial support to Local Groups.

So far, Local Groups have been successful in holding low/zero cost meetings and public events using homes belonging to members or other premises that members can access for the members' meetings.

For public events, we neither charge for speaking nor pay to do so. (For speaking at corporate events, we may charge if appropriate).

Process

The overall (multi-year) process of building a Local Group looks like this:

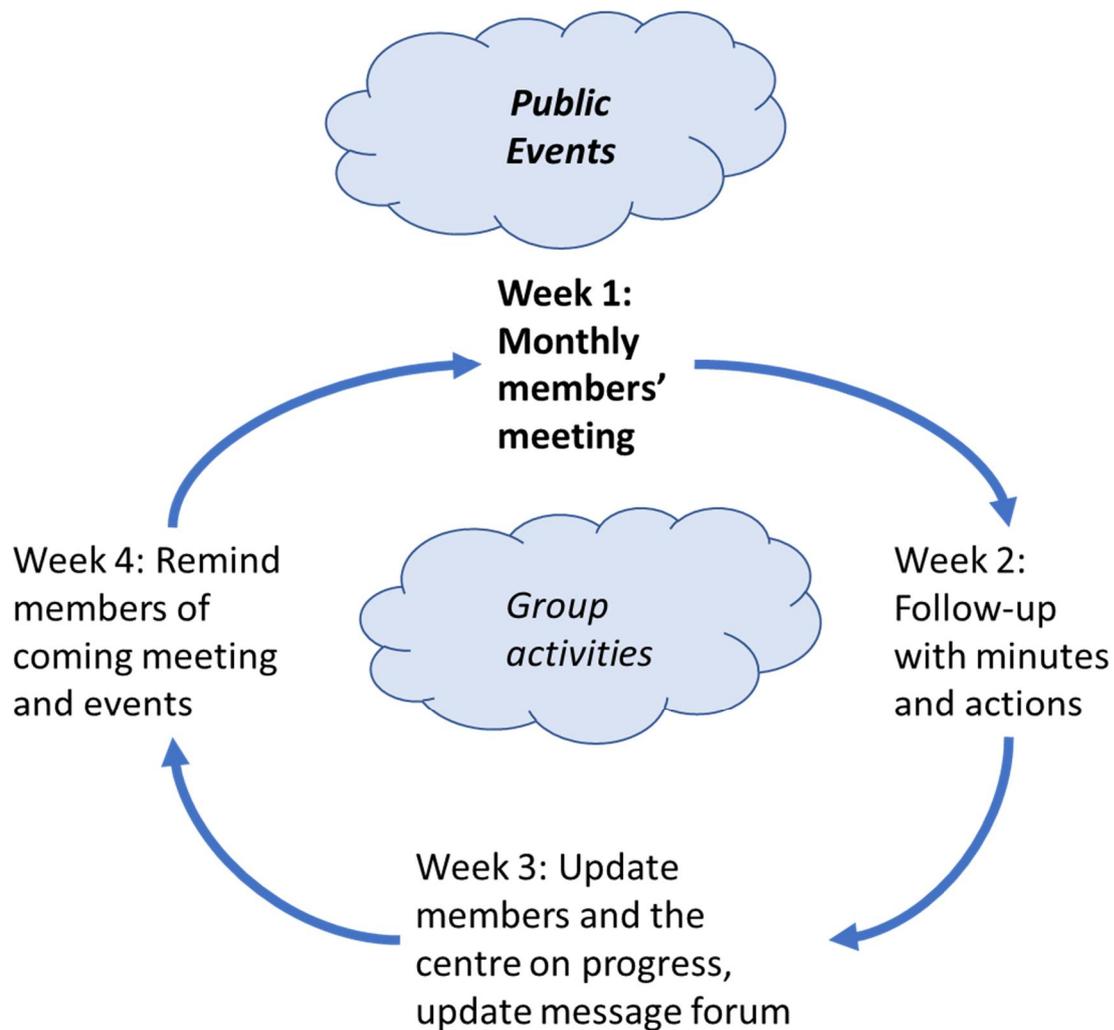
	Set-up	Spread the Word	Build influence	Influence local candidates and voters
Key Objective	Create a small team that shares the objectives of the organisation and is willing to help	Recruit new members Spread the word among the public	Build relationships with local stakeholders	Ensure that mass impoverishment is on the local agenda Publish rankings of the candidates
Key actions	Get core group together Make sure they understand the values and objectives Plan short-term activities	Hold local speaking events Spread ideas among members' networks Recruit new members Map local stakeholders	Approach local community influencers and align them Approach local MPs and candidates and align them where possible. Get them to sign the pledge	Step up public activities Publish league tables widely Highlight positions of local candidates Encourage candidates to shift position

To stay on track with this overall process, the groups will need:

- regular meetings – about once a month seems to be the optimal frequency;
- Frequent contact with the Chair between meetings to maintain enthusiasm and momentum;
- Shared activities where appropriate.

These are particularly important at times such as the present when the political winds are blowing in favour of mass impoverishment, and many people are downhearted and despondent.

To maintain momentum and energy, a typical four-weekly cycle for a Local Group might look like this.



Sample agendas for members' meetings

The first meeting needs to focus on team building, more than action. But even so, people want to know what the organisation is all about and how it will make a difference.

A suggested Meeting 1 agenda is as follows:

1. Review of Objectives of the Meeting and Agenda
2. Personal introductions, e.g.:
 - a. Who each person is?
 - b. What is their motivation for joining?
 - c. What is their background and expertise?
3. Guest speaker from the Centre or another Group:
 - a. What is The 99% organisation all about?
 - b. What is the role of the Local Groups?

- c. What types of activities have other groups carried out?
4. Group members' ideas for action
5. AOB
6. Date of next meeting.

A suggested agenda for Meeting 2 onwards is as follows:

1. Review of Objectives of the Meeting and Agenda
2. Personal introductions, e.g.:
 - a. Who each person is?
 - b. What is their motivation for joining?
 - c. What is their background and expertise?
3. Quick review of actions from the last meeting
4. Big picture update:
 - a. What is going on in the world that we need to know about?
 - b. What is the news from the rest of The 99% Organisation?
5. Group members ideas for action:
 - a. Local opportunities for public events
 - b. Local influencers to approach
 - i. Media
 - ii. Church / charities
 - iii. Political parties and pressure groups
6. Developing a Local Group Plan
7. AOB
8. Date of next meeting.

Every 6 months or so, it would be good to take stock of the Group's progress and plans. An agenda along the following lines might be useful.

1. Review of Objectives of the Meeting and Agenda
2. Personal introductions, e.g.:
 - a. Who each person is?
 - b. What is their motivation for joining?
 - c. What is their background and expertise?
3. Quick review of actions from the last meeting
4. Stock-take:
 - a. Where did we think we would be by now?

- b. Are we on track?
 - c. What has worked particularly well?
 - d. What could have been more effective? How?
 - e. How should we adjust our local plan?
5. Group members ideas for action:
 - a. Local opportunities for public events
 - b. Local influencers to approach
 - c. Help from the Centre or other Groups
6. AOB
7. Date of next meeting.

Communicating with members

When communicating with members – e.g. via email to send out details of coming meetings, or minutes of past meetings – it is important to remember that while they have consented for us to use their email addresses in this way, they have not consented to having them made public. For this reason, we recommend the following protocol:

- The Group Chair should send the email **to** him/herself
- They should **cc** the 99% Coordinating Committee (cc@99-percent.org), which helps us to understand the progress all the Groups are making
- They should **bcc** all the Local Group members, to keep their addresses private.

Similarly, when you are posting on the [Discussion Forum](#), be aware that this is publicly visible, so do not mention any personal details (e.g. names of members or politicians with whom you have spoken).

The Group Plan

The second agenda suggests creating a Local Group Plan. This need not be an elaborate exercise, and the results can be captured on a single piece of paper.

Here is a template that may be useful.

Group Name	<i>Oxford</i>	Date of Plan	<i>21/3/2020</i>	
Long-term goals	<p><i>To ensure that the importance of Mass Impoverishment as a political and economic challenge is widely recognised in Oxford.</i></p> <p><i>To ensure that all political candidates are aware that their stance and voting record on this issue are under scrutiny and will affect their electoral prospects</i></p>			
Target	Next 3 months	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Group Members	<i>5</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>500</i>
Public events held	<i>2</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>8</i>
% of local population aware of 99% and mass impoverishment		<i>1%</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>30%</i>
Candidates contacted		<i>2</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>
Candidates aligned				<i>3</i>
Activity Plan	Objective	Responsible	Timing	
<i>Run public event at University</i>	<i>To engage academic community</i>	<i>JRM</i>	<i>April</i>	
<i>Secure coverage in local press</i>	<i>To raise wider awareness</i>	<i>PK</i>	<i>May</i>	
<i>Contact local Green MP</i>	<i>To secure alignment and get pledge signed</i>	<i>JPS</i>	<i>May</i>	
<i>Arrange for Mark E Thomas to speak at Oxford Literary Festival</i>	<i>To raise wider awareness</i>	<i>PK</i>	<i>June</i>	
<i>Recruit new members</i>	<i>Build scale and capacity</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	

Interacting with the Centre

Support

Especially during the early stages, Local Groups may wish to call upon support from the Centre or from other groups. Even when they do not *need* support, because they are making good progress, they may still wish to have input from the Centre and from other groups in order to keep their own members informed about what is going on in the wider organisation.

If you want support, please contact Rich Wylor-Owen.

And don't forget that the website contains a number of [resources](#) which you and your group may find useful.

Public Events

If your group has an idea for an event at which Mark E Thomas could speak, please first make contact with the organisers of the event to let them know about The 99% Organisation and the book, and check that they are interested in inviting Mark to speak. There is a document on the website to help you make the [pitch](#). Once you know the organisers are interested, then please let Mark know and he can finalise arrangements for logistics, etc. Please do not send lists of organisations that *ought* to be interested – even if you are right, we do not have the bandwidth to follow up unqualified opportunities.

Sharing ideas and results

In the same way, Local Groups should feel free to share their experiences with the Centre and with the wider organisation. The easiest way to do this is to contact Rich Wylor-Owen. If you have recently held a successful local event, please do post about it on the [99% discussion forum](#) so that others can see your success and emulate it.

Resolving difficult issues

There may be difficult issues which arise – either positive or negative – for example:

- your local MP is not a backbencher but a minister or even a cabinet member – this is potentially positive, but requires careful handling and therefore we ask that you involve the Centre in making contact;

- you have a creative idea for a new local event but not quite certain if it fits with the values of the organisation. Please do discuss this with the Centre;
- you have a local member whose behaviour is becoming disruptive, and you are not sure how to handle it.

In any of these cases, please contact Mark E Thomas for advice.

Growing

Recruiting

The simplest way to recruit is to make sure that each member encourages like-minded friends and colleagues to join. If the new members in turn do the same, the organisation can grow very fast.

The other key mechanism is public events. So far Local Groups have arranged events linked with:

- the Institute for Public Policy Research – a leading think tank concerned with economic justice;
- Beyond Money – a commercial organisation which puts on public events;
- the Green Party;
- the Gladstone Club – a group interested in economic policy.

In each case, Mark E Thomas has spoken at the event, and new members have joined up as a result.

Spreading the word

Networking is also the simplest way of spreading the word. Simply getting members to talk to friends and colleagues and encourage them to visit the website and read the book is very effective. Many people will not be persuaded by discussion but, if they manage to read to the end of the book, can be persuaded by the evidence it contains.

Mainstream media coverage is also extremely valuable. So far this is an area in which we have not made as much progress as we hoped – but this can always change. The decision by the *Financial Times* late last year to select 99% as one of the Best Books of 2019 was extremely helpful. If you have any members with PR expertise, this will be very useful both with local media and national media.

And social media are increasingly powerful. Members can help spread the word, quite simply, by liking and sharing/re-tweeting posts from Mark E Thomas and The 99% Organisation on LinkedIn and Twitter (@MrMarkEThomas and @99Organisation).

And of course public events are also powerful for spreading the word.

Sample plans/activities

Groups will have their own ideas, based on their local situation, their members' skills, networks and experience and the types of local institutions with which they can interact.

Ideas which have so far been discussed or implemented by Local Groups include:

- Speaking events at local venues;
- Handing out flyers at marches (xr and brexit);
- Speaking at conferences, festivals etc;
- Public stalls along the lines of the [american pie](#) stall run by cbs;
- Engaging with schools and universities;
- Getting film students to make a documentary.

Creating Local Influence

Stakeholder mapping

A good starting point is for each group to create a local stakeholder map. The process for building the map has three stages:

1. members list the groups and organisations that they feel the group should seek to influence;
2. they assess the level of influence that each stakeholder might have on government policy:
 - a. low – this stakeholder has local influence but, realistically, negligible national influence;
 - b. medium – this stakeholder has significant local influence and may be able to influence important players at the national level;
 - c. high – this stakeholder is influential at the national level;
3. they assess the degree to which the group has access to this stakeholder:
 - a. low – we do not currently see how we could get to this stakeholder;
 - b. medium – we believe we probably could get to make contact with this stakeholder either directly or through others;
 - c. high – we are confident that we can make contact with this stakeholder directly.

The resulting map will perhaps look something like this.

ILLUSTRATIVE STAKEHOLDER MAP

Level of Influence of Stakeholder

		Low	Medium	High
Level of Access to Stakeholder	High		Bishop	
	Medium		Local MP	Local celebrity
	Low			Prime Minister

Unless you are lucky, there may be no-one in the top right-hand box of your map. But the top-middle and middle-top boxes could be very fruitful to contact.

Contact with key stakeholders

If you *do* have any very influential stakeholders, please do reach out to the Centre for support in contacting them. And of course if you want support and advice in general, please do reach out either to the Centre or to other Local Groups who might have relevant experience.

Candidates' pledge

When you are talking to local candidates – or indeed your local MP – the first aim of your discussion should be to share with them the ideas of the 99% Organisation and seek their active support. A good way of testing their commitment is to ask them to sign the [pledge](#) on the website. Please do let us know whether they agreed to sign or refused – until the league tables described below are in place, a list of those who have pledged support and those who have refused will be extremely useful.

League tables

One of the pressure points that the 99% Organisation is aiming to put in place is a political league table which ranks each MP on the basis of their voting record. Those who have consistently voted for policies which will help to address the problem of mass impoverishment will be near the top of the

league table and those who have consistently voted for policies which exacerbate mass impoverishment will be at the bottom. These league tables will be used with the national media, but they will also be very useful for Local Groups in their discussions with local candidates and MPs.

Reporting progress

Even if your contact has not yet resulted in any firm commitments, we are interested to hear in the development of your local networks, so please do keep us posted.