

Democracy Hub Briefing

How to Manage a Hub

What is a Democracy Hub?

A Democracy Hub is a local neutral, non-party-political space where people can gather to discuss:-

- how we are governed, locally and nationally;
- what needs to change, locally and nationally, and
- how they can contribute to making that change happen.

A Democracy Hub, while promoted and supported by Reboot Gb, is not 'owned' by us. It is owned by its participants - those who have all agreed to the rules of engagement. These are the principles designed to keep your meetings positive, inclusive, and respectful of all contributions.

You are welcome to run your Democracy Hub as you see fit, but Reboot Gb asks two things of you. Both are politically non-contentious.

1. Please run a 'Register to Vote' campaign. Far too many people, especially 18 to 24-year-olds, aren't registered to vote.
2. Please help get out the vote at election time(s).

Reboot Gb will act as a resource and support for Democracy Hub activities.

How do you recruit for a local Democracy Hub?

If you're already active locally, what follows will sound like teaching grandmothers to suck eggs. But bear with us. Some people are not as politically aware as you may be. Maybe you have been part of a national campaign, such as a Remain/pro-Europe group or a group campaigning on a local issue. In that case, we need you to repurpose that expertise and share it.

Setting up a local Democracy Hub is a bit like setting up a book club – but you'll be talking about politics rather than the latest novel. You'll already have a local circle of friends and acquaintances, so begin there. Ask them if they're concerned about what's happening to the country and how that impacts nationally and locally. Literally everything around them is touched by 'politics'. So gently point that out to them if they say something like 'politics isn't really my bag'. Politics will impact something they care about.

Four or five people is an excellent place to start. You don't need huge numbers because your attendees will spread the word if your first meeting's a success. Make your first meeting a 'getting to know you and your concerns' session – we've produced a draft plan for this; see below.

Where to meet?

The pandemic is far from over, as we all know. But we believe it's crucial that your first meeting is face to face. Please think about what Covid precautions you're comfortable with. Maybe you'd prefer if people wore masks. Or did a lateral flow test before your meeting. Let others know the ground rules politely; we need everyone to turn up and be comfortable.

If you're content to host your first meeting in your home – great. Or ask your local pub if you can take over a corner or if they have a room you could use. They'll be glad of the business and probably won't charge you. If they do, have a whip-round – it won't be much.

Our suggested draft agenda (first meeting)

1. **Welcome** (from the host/chair)
2. **'Round robin' introductions.** Begin to get to know each other. Share skills, life experience, concerns, what you enjoy – and why you're here.
3. **Democracy Hub Rules of Engagement**

It's important that you – and all participants in your Hub – agree on the behaviour that will govern all your meetings and interactions. We hope your Hub will be a positive place that values debate and courtesy – hence our recommendations.

We will do no harm. We reject violence, whether spoken or physical.

We will show respect for one another.

We encourage diversity and will not discriminate against anyone regardless of race, age, gender, sexual orientation or ability.

Our meetings will be a 'party politics free' space.

We will be honest and truthful in all our dealings.

We will look for positive outcomes not rehearse the same old arguments.

What is said in the room will stay in the room.

We may use civil disobedience as a campaigning tool but only after a full and open discussion.

We will rotate the chair at every meeting to ensure that no one voice dominates.

We will rotate the scribe at every meeting or make and circulate an audio recording after every session.

4. Closing discussion.
5. Date of next meeting.

If you have any problems with any of these guidelines, please let us know.

When you've had your first meeting, please report back! This is a learning curve for us and many of you, so let's support each other from the get-go.

Institutional Groups

If you're at school, college or university and want to start a Democracy Hub, please contact us at hubs@rebootgb.today. We're very interested in finding out more about your concerns and thoughts for the future so we can support you appropriately.

We are deeply concerned about the number of young people who don't engage with the political process and are not even registered to vote. We'd like to help you develop campaigns that will engage and energise your peers. After all, it's your future.

Moving Forward

You have a core group of people that share concerns, agree to the rules of engagement and want to meet up. What to do next? Look at this list and see what appeals, based on your group and its level of political knowledge and connections.

1 Research

The best place to start is in your local area. What's going on? What are the Council up to, and what is its political composition?

Who is your MP – and which party does s/he belong to? What's their voting record on things you care about? Do they have regular local 'surgeries'?

Divi up the work needed so that no one's overloaded.

Here are some useful sites:-

www.theyworkforyou.com – MPs, Lords, Councillors – it has the lot.

www.gov.uk – also has a lot of information on your representatives.

www.hey-mp.uk is a site run by Best for Britain that allows you to ask your MP to oppose the Elections and Police Bills which are currently going through Parliament.

2. Who can do what?

What knowledge do you have within your group? Which skills? Would they be prepared to give a presentation or a talk to the group and then answer questions?

What would people be happy doing? Everyone must be comfortable with the task they're given. And every task has equal value.

3. Where do you keep the knowledge you've acquired and the plans you've made?

It needs to be somewhere accessible to everybody. Online – Google docs, for instance – may be the obvious place, but if some of your members aren't IT comfortable ... Maybe you can buddy them up with someone who is so that they can get up to speed.

4. Could you run a street stall?

We're heading into winter, but consider a street stall when there is a dry day forecast. It lets people know who you are and what you're up to. It can be fun getting together, drinking lots of hot drinks and chatting to people. And it's a great place to register people to vote. It can be done in 5 minutes on a smartphone. Do download our 'How to Register' document to see for yourself.

Follow-up Meetings

It will become evident very quickly where your group's interests and concerns lie. But learning how things currently work is essential if we want to broker change. Then it is time to use your knowledge to impact the outside world.

Here's a suggestion for a draft agenda for future meetings that will move things forward.

Sample: Meeting Agenda

- Catchup on local and national issues
- Key MP & Council actions review
- Review an article or video on the topic of the week
- Discussion on the topic
- Discuss how does this information impacts on what the group does?
- Planned actions, events and supporting what is going on nationally
- Any other business

Potential Workstreams?

Education	Local	Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is an MP supposed to do? • What is government supposed to do? • What do political parties do? • How do parties & manifestos work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs Analysis – what’s missing? • Your Council Assessment – what should be the priorities? • Your MP Assessment – how do they vote? Do they listen? What do you want them to work on? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a local ‘Register to Vote’ campaign – what are the best places to catch people? • Who is the ‘best’ PPC candidate – what do they need to get elected? • Bring out the vote on polling day

Checklist

