Non-violent direct action

What is non-violent direct action?
Non-violent direct action, often referred to as nonviolent resistance or civil resistance is examples of peaceful actions that refuse to cooperate with or follow a law or practice to make a political statement. Non-violent direct action has been used by social movements throughout history. Sit ins at segregated diners in America during the civil rights era, women living on Greenham common at the Greenham women’s peace camp against cruise missiles and more recently the Occupy movement are just some examples.

Some examples
Sit in – Sit ins are when one or more people occupy a space by sitting in and and refusing to move to further a political point. An example of this be anti-capitalist protestors sitting outside the entrance to a bank or an environmental group sitting in the road to stop vehicles on their way to cut down trees.

Teach in – Usually describe a forum where people get together to discuss an issue or topic over a prolonged time period and where debate and discussion is encouraged. They are sometimes used at the time of strikes and were popular as an anti-war action during the 70s.

Die ins – Die ins have been used as a way to highlight human rights abuses, disagreement with wars and weapons and other social issues. Die ins allow for people to occupy a space by lying down as if to signify they are dead.

Stunt – Stunts is a broad term for an action or activity that bring publicity to an issue or campaign. Things like flash mobs, street theatre and interrupting events or speeches can be seen as stunts.

Demonstration/Marches – Demonstrations and marches are usually groups of people who meet together for a political cause. They may consist of a rally and speakers and may march to a particular marker of power, for example protests that end near Parliament.

Vigil – Vigils are usually a sign of protest that are quieter and more peaceful than demonstrations and marches. It would usually consist of a group of people meeting and getting together for quiet reflection for the campaign.

Walk out – Walk outs are different to strikes in that they can be more spontaneous and the act of walking out of a space, for example a lecture theatre during a lecture, send a powerful message and creates a powerful image too.

Collective boycott or use of an alternative provider – Collective boycotts are when a group decide not to purchase products or services from a particular provider. This was a tactic used during the apartheid era where British consumers were encouraged not to buy South African goods.

Strikes (including rent or fee strikes) – Strikes occur when people withhold their labour or in the case of rent or fee strikes, withhold their money.

If you want to undertake non-violent direct action as part of your campaign
Some forms of non-violent direct action contain risks. For that reason if you want to take part in non-violent direct action as part of your KCLSU supported campaign and receive funding and guidance for it, we would need you to get in touch with campaign@kclsu.org and initially talk through your ideas with the campaigns coordinator.