



## 5.6 Lobbying your MP

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An important aspect of many campaigns is gaining the support of MPs. They will be able to communicate your objection to government policy and push for a change.

### **What is lobbying?**

Lobbying is about influencing the thinking of legislators or other public officials to come round to your point of view. Lobbying can take many different forms and can be done by paid lobbyists from the charity or corporate sector or by grass roots activists and members of the public.

If an MP receives a certain number of contacts about an issue, they are then likely to raise the issue either in Parliament or with the relevant government ministers.

### **You can lobby your MP in the following ways:**

- ★ Write to them – the more letters an MP receives from constituents on a certain issue, the more likely they are to take notice and do something about it.
- ★ Arrange a meeting – you can meet your MP at their constituency office during their 'surgery' time or at the Houses of Parliament.
- ★ Arrange a mass lobby - a large number of people can try to meet their MPs in the Houses of Parliament at the same time

### **What you can aim for your MP to do:**

You can request that your MP act on your behalf in one of the following ways:

- ★ Raise your concerns with the relevant Government minister
- ★ Raise your concerns with a Parliamentary question
- ★ Sign an Early Day Motion\* in Parliament supporting the issue
- ★ Make commitments addressing the issue within your community

**\*Early Day Motion (EDM)** - The name for when an MP gives notice of a motion for which no date has been set to debate. EDMs are very rarely debated, but it's a good way for your MP's opinion on the subject to be recorded. Your MP can also use an EDM to gauge levels of support for an issue amongst other MPs and to raise awareness. MPs also find EDMs useful for local press releases.

See <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/p03.pdf> for more information.

### **How do I contact my MP?**

- ★ Find out who your MP is:

Go to [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) and type in your postcode.

Or call the House of Commons Information Office on 020 7219 4272.

Or search by name, constituency or postcode at <http://www.locata.co.uk/commons/>

★ Write to them:

All MPs have Westminster offices and will make arrangements for their mail to be dealt with or redirected when they are away from London:

*Name Surname* MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

★ Email them:

Find out MP e-mail addresses at [www.parliament.uk/directories/hciolists/alms.cfm](http://www.parliament.uk/directories/hciolists/alms.cfm)  
Contact them via the [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com) website

★ Phone them:

You can contact your MP's office at the House of Commons by asking the switchboard to put you through: 020 7219 3000. You should be able to find out the phone number via your MP's website or at your local library.

### Writing to your MP

- ★ Introduce STAR – this will mean subsequent correspondence has more impact, and your MP will be more likely to accept future invitations
- ★ Be concise and precise – inform them about the issue, your views and suggested solutions, but remember that they receive a huge amount of correspondence.
- ★ Be clear what you are asking - let them know what you would like them to do (e.g. that you would like to meet them, or you would like them to sign an EDM in support of the campaign, etc)
- ★ Request a reply - Ask for a specific response.

### Meeting your MP

**At Westminster** - You can arrange to visit your MP when the House of Commons is sitting. You will need to make an appointment to see them in the Central Lobby in Parliament.

**In their constituency** - MPs also hold regular 'surgeries'\* in their constituencies. You can find out details from their office. Groups such as STAR often visit their local MPs.

- ★ Introduce STAR – explain who you are and why you want to meet them
- ★ Be realistic – make sensible aims about what you can cover in one meeting. List the most important things you want to cover.
- ★ Go as a group - attend the meeting as a (small) group and decide who will speak on the issue
- ★ Have a clear aim - be clear about what you want your MP to do as a result of the meeting, such as writing to a minister or asking a parliamentary question
- ★ Predict their responses – research your MP and their party and use this to predict their responses. Prepare yourself to respond effectively if they disagree.

\***MP surgeries** – A set opportunity for you to meet your MP to raise any issues or concerns that you have. Most MPs hold surgeries at least once a month, details of which you can find out from

their websites or offices. Some MPs operate an advance bookings policy. Others you can just turn up to on a 'first come, first served basis', so it is best to check before hand and, if necessary arrange to meet another time.

### **Follow Up**

- ★ Always write and thank your MP, include the main points agreed and any action that has been promised on either side.
- ★ Record any additional information you found out about your MP
- ★ Consider inviting your MP to a follow up event at your union. If you can make the event a photo opportunity, so much the better. You can speak to your MP's secretary to help with getting some media coverage.

### **Contacting a Member of the House of Lords**

Members of the House of Lords have an important role to play. It is often in the Lords that a government loses a vote on legislation. Members attend the House on a voluntary basis and only a few have an office or any staff. This can make it tricky to contact them directly, but here are some ideas. A full list of Lords can be found at [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldinfo.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldinfo.htm)

### **Writing a letter to a Member of the House of Lords**

Name, Surname and title  
House of Lords,  
London,  
SW1A 0PW

For information about how to address Members in letters and on envelopes go to [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldinfo/ldadds.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldinfo/ldadds.htm)

### **Phoning a Member of the House of Lords**

Telephone the switchboard (020 7219 3000) who will either transfer you to the relevant office or take a message. Alternatively you can leave a message with the 'message service' 020 7219 5353.