



Lobbying Your MP

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How to lobby your local MP

Lobbying is using your right to meet your MP as one of his or her constituents. You can do this either in your constituency or by visiting Parliament.

This guide tells you how to lobby your MP in your local area.

An MP will see you as a constituent, whether you voted for them or not.

If you are below voting age you are still a constituent and one who will soon have a say in the future. MPs are meant to "represent" each constituent's interests. This does not mean that your MP has to agree with you –

after all each MP has up to 90,000 constituents – but it does mean he or she should listen and be prepared to pass on your views to the Government.

You should therefore use a meeting with your MP to try to:

- Give them the information they need about why youth services are too good to lose to spending cuts.
- Influence their views.
- Persuade them that many other constituents share your concerns.
- Ask them to pass on your concerns to the Government.
- Ask them to take appropriate action (and we suggest some below) to show that they support you.

Meeting your MP

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In theory you can turn up at Westminster at any time the House of Commons is sitting and request a meeting with your MP. But there is no guarantee that they will be there or have the time to meet you, so it is always best to arrange to meet your MP in advance.

Can't make it to Westminster?

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You can lobby your MP in your local area by arranging to go along to one of their surgeries or contacting their office to make a separate appointment to see them (please note that MPs are usually only around for local meetings on Monday mornings and Fridays as they need to be in Westminster the rest of the week).

A good way for you to see your MP is to attend one of their advertised 'surgeries'. It is always best to give your MP's office a call beforehand to check whether you need to make an appointment, although some MPs' surgeries are drop-in sessions that operate on a first come, first served basis.

In the first example, make sure you call your MP well in advance to make an appointment as they tend to get booked up weeks ahead of a surgery. In the latter, it is advisable to turn up early to ensure you have the opportunity to see your MP and enough time to raise your concerns.

Check when and where your MP holds their surgery by accessing the MP's website through the parliament site – www.parliament.uk – or by 'googling' to find your own MP's website. If this does not work, just give their office a call and ask.

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Why not write?

You may find it easier to write a letter or send an email, although meeting face to face is always best. Remember to give your MP a clear picture of what is happening to young people's services in your area. Make your letter as personal as possible. Your MP will find it difficult to ignore the human cost of the cuts on young people and workers.

A template letter to your MP and local councillor can be found in this pack. Please feel free to change this to show your own experience.

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Getting in touch with your MP

The best way to contact your MP is to write to him or her at the House of Commons, Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA. Most MPs also use email, and should treat emails in the same manner as a letter. You can find out your MP's email address at the following website: <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/>

Remember to give your home address even in an email, as MPs have a strict rule about dealing only with their own constituents.

The House of Commons Information office can tell you who your MPs is if you call them on 020 7219 4272

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Meeting with your MP

It is best to be as brief, clear and courteous as possible. If they send their researcher instead, treat them in the same way.

You should thank him or her for taking the time to see you, establish how much time they have, make two or three key points and – most importantly:

- Ask them to follow up the meeting. You can use the Choose Youth Lobbyists Briefing to help, but point out how the spending cuts to young people's services and youth work will affect you, your family and your workmates if possible. MPs will want to hear the personal stories of youth workers and the young people who use these services, who are being caught in the middle of decisions about spending cuts.

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Ask your MP to:

- Sign the Choose Youth e-petition: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/4671> and Early Day Motion 1013 urging the Government to recognise the value of youth work and find urgent ways to protect youth services from spending cuts.
- Raise your concerns with ministers at the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Treasury by meeting them and by writing to them.
- Speak to Local Government Association members, the local government employers and councillors in their constituency.
- Arrange meetings with members in their constituency through Choose Youth partners to carry on the discussion.

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The follow up

Well done for taking the first step and speaking to your MP, but it doesn't end there. Following the meeting you should:

- Keep in touch with your MP to find out what they are doing to support the campaign since your meeting.
- Feed back to your friends and/or co-workers and local community. You can also post this on the Choose Youth facebook page: www.facebook.com/chooseyouth
- Don't forget to let us know how you get on so that we can also follow your meeting up with MPs in Westminster.

Please email kerry.jenkins@unitetheunion.org with a short report back.

- You could always invite your MP to come along to your youth club or project for a visit or if that is difficult invite them to meet with you and your colleagues somewhere more convenient.
- Speak to the union about organising some sort of local press stunt or photo opportunity – you may want to involve your MP in this depending on the outcome of your meeting.

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Top tips

Don't worry! Be confident in putting across your argument and case – remember that you are likely to know more about this issue than your MP.

- Use personal stories and examples in your argument, this is likely to have more of an influence on the MP.
- Be clear on what you expect your MP to do following your meeting and that you would like a response/update from them.
- Don't forget that the cuts will dominate our lives until the next election. Your MP will want to make sure that he/she is on the right side of their constituents on these issues.

Choose Youth - speaking up for young people

<http://chooseyouth.org>