



NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION – SAVE OUR NHS

Constituency Campaign Month – January 2010

How to lobby your MP locally

What is lobbying?

Lobbying is about raising issues with and seeking to influence elected representatives. An MP should see you as a constituent rather than simply a trade unionist and as such is meant to represent a constituent's interests even if he/she does not agree with them.

Is lobbying effective?

It is important that you, your colleagues, friends, neighbours and family contact your MP about your concerns on cuts and changes to the NHS – the more contacts an MP has on the same issue the more likely they are going to be to do something about it.

How do we lobby locally?

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.

What is a constituency 'surgery'?

Just about every MP holds constituency surgeries – many hold them every week, some hold them once a month. These surgeries are an opportunity for MPs constituents to raise any personal concerns and problems they have and what they want or hope their MP can help with.

Do you need to make an appointment?

Some MPs organise their surgeries on an appointment only basis whilst others allow you to just turn up and wait during a set time period. Most of them take place on either a Friday or Saturday when the MP is back working in the constituency.

How do I find out when and where I can meet my MP?

You can check when and where your MP holds their surgery and how to make an appointment through your local council website, or by accessing the MP's website through the parliament site www.parliament.uk

How do I find out who my MP is?

If you are not sure who your MP is then there are a couple of ways you can check this out:

- Go to <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/> or via the 'find your MP' link on the main parliament website www.parliament.uk All you will need is your postcode.
- The House of Commons Information Office can inform you who your MP is if you call them on 0207 219 4272.

When you write or call your MP make sure you make clear they know you are a constituent as MPs are bound by parliamentary rules to only help their own constituents. At this stage, don't go into too much detail about what you

want to see them about, just simply state you have concerns about local NHS services and the cuts that are taking place. Do say that you work in the NHS if that is the case.

Please let the union know if you have managed to arrange a meeting with your MP (and who your MP is) by emailing hannah.blythyn@unitetheunion.org

When you see your MP

When you see your MP, start from the basis of assuming they know nothing about the issues you raise – make sure you clearly set out who you are, identifying yourself as a constituent, where you work and/or the local services you use that could be at risk. Be sure to get the following points across in a clear, courteous and concise manner:

- Thank the MP for seeing you and establish how much time you have to talk to them.
- The background to the issue.
- How and why it impacts on you – use examples if you can.
- How it affects the MP's constituents/area – use examples if you can.
- If possible, offer an alternative solution.
- Be specific on what your MP can do to help and what exactly you are asking them to do.

- Ask them to update you on what they do following your meeting.

After meeting your MP

It is important that meeting your MP on this issue is just the start of it. Following the meeting you can:

- Keep in touch with your MP on what they are doing in support.
- Feed back to fellow members in your workplace and local community.
- Don't forget to let the union's political team know how you get on so that they can also follow your meeting up with MPs in Westminster.
Please email hannah.blythyn@unitetheunion.org with a short report back.
- You could always invite your MP to come along on a workplace visit or if that is difficult invite them to meet with a number of colleagues outside of the workplace.
- 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.

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. In addition, if you work in the NHS, you're the expert!**
- **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 (see the separate briefing for 'MP Action Points'.)**
- **Don't forget the political climate has changed dramatically in the last six months – MPs and their positions may have also changed.**



www.unitetheunion.org/unite4ournhs