

How to lobby your MP



Unite

FOR PEOPLE, NOT FOR PROFIT

Tuesday, 9 March 2010 – Committee Room 10

COMMITTEE ROOM 10:

2:00pm - Mass Meeting with Unite Parliamentary Group and other trade union MPs
(allow at least half an hour to get through security) Committee Room 10, Houses of Parliament.
(Please note that room space may be limited due to factors beyond the union's control).

3:00pm - Lobby of individual MPs

4.30pm - End

How to lobby MPs

The purpose of lobbying is to make sure MPs and government are aware of the experiences of Unite members when they make decisions that affect our lives.

Write to your MP

Write a letter to your MP for an appointment on 9 March, 2010 (see model letter). To find the name and address of your MP call the House of Commons information line on 0207 219 4272 or look at www.locata.co.uk. You can also e-mail your MP through this website. We will have Committee Room 10 available between 3pm and 4.30pm. If the MP is available, they should respond with a time. If they are not available, you should receive a response informing you of this. Then you can make an arrangement to see your MP at one of their surgeries in the constituency.

The green card system of lobbying

If you do not receive a reply from your MP or do not get a chance to write to them then you can use the green card system (although it is always best to try to get an appointment and we recommend this). This allows you to fill in an appointment card in the Central Lobby (the main central area of Parliament where the public can meet MPs) and the staff in the House will try to find your MP for a meeting. You should wait in the Central Lobby while your MP is found. This may take some time, so please be patient. Sometimes your MP will be available to meet you, but if not they will send back a message saying they can't. If this is the case, you should see them in their surgery in the constituency. If you cannot attend the lobby, then see your MP in their surgery, the same principles apply.

When you meet your MP

Unite already lobbies government at a national level. However, the lobbying done by individual members is crucial as it provides MPs with your personal experience. You should always stress how the government's action (or inaction) affects you, your colleagues, your organisation and your service users (especially if they have a vote in the MP's constituency). Your experiences will make the MP aware of the issue on a more human level, rather than just the bland figures and policy. If the MP supports our case then you are giving them valuable ammunition. If they do not support you, then you are making them respond to you as an individual, rather than on the abstract political level. Remember our case is strong and we already have support in the House, therefore anything you can do to persuade your MP to be supportive or to become more active on our behalf is a bonus for the campaign.

When you meet your MP, say what the lobby is about and tell your story simply. What are the funding issues? How does this affect job security? How does it impact on the type of service you deliver? What does it mean for service users and for you and your colleagues? Remember, you are much more of an expert on these issues than your MP. Hand them a copy of the *MPs' briefing* to read and ask them to sign the Early Day Motion. If they are a minister, you could ask them to look again at the funding streams in their department to ensure they provide quality jobs and security. As a constituency MP, you could ask them to talk with the local authority to ensure that funding for Not for Profit organisations is sustainable.

Have fun lobbying!