

## **Putting your case to your MP**

### **Find out about your MP**

MPs do not always accept their party's position. You may be able to persuade them if they understand the impact a policy has on their constituents.

Find out about your MP's views. You can use the internet to search for information or visit [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) or [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) or <http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/>

You can phone the House of Commons information desk on 020 7219 4272.

### **Write to your MP**

Here are some tips for an effective letter to your MP.

- Keep the letter brief, ideally no more than one side of A4.
- Avoid jargon and write in your own words. Be sure to make your letter personal and explain how and why this issue relates to you, as a constituent.
- Highlight how the issue of cuts to the funding of Adult Education has affected your college and the likely impact on the community
- The impact of your letter will be increased if it is personal and different to 50 others on your MP's desk on the same issue.
- Request that your letter is forwarded to Nick Boles MP the government minister for skills and enterprise. That way the minister and their civil servants are reminded of the issue as well as your MP. By convention, a letter forwarded by an MP to a minister must receive a reply. You can use the reply for your local publicity.
- Keep a copy of your letter and ask for a reply.

Regular contact with your MP makes sense as part of a long-term communications plan. Keep them updated through the year on your campaign and make a point of sending newsletters and inviting them to events and awards ceremonies. Even if they don't attend, they'll remember that you invited them.

Contact your MP [[Link to https://www.writetothem.com](https://www.writetothem.com)]

### **Meeting your MP**

All MPs, even ministers, hold regular "surgeries" where they listen to constituents' concerns – usually on a weekly basis. To find out when and where your MP's surgery takes place, check your local paper for details, or phone your MP in the House of Commons on 0207 219 3000.

Arrange the meeting in advance – don't just turn up unprepared – and let your MP know in advance what you would like to discuss.

Tell your MP who will be coming and why this issue is important to them. Between two and four people is a good size. It will do your cause no good at all if the meeting is too big for your MP to hear you all.

Be professional – arrive early for your meeting, thank your MP for agreeing to see you and stick to the agreed time limit. You may only get a brief meeting, so prepare carefully and decide which issues are the most relevant.

Don't worry if you don't cover every point you hoped to make, you can cover them in a thank you note. Your MP is unlikely to be an expert on all areas of government policy or fully understand the consequences of policy. Be prepared to explain the issues and the background, but make it relevant to your constituency.

Have a pre-prepared piece of information that you can leave with your MP that makes your case. Use the UNISON briefing on Adult Education. Be prepared to answer questions, not just ask them. After all, a successful dialogue is never one-sided. Offer solutions, rather than being wholly negative.

Suggest to your MP aware that you are willing to act as a local resource on the issues discussed. This offer is likely to please and surprise your MP, as it will set you apart from other campaigners who may only want to "take" from their MP.

Invite your MP to any campaign/rallies that are being held, and make sure you invite your local newspaper photographer along.

End the meeting by recapping on the points you have both agreed to undertake. Send a follow-up letter within a week to 10 days. Make it short and cordial, re-iterating what was said in the meeting, and suggesting that you continue to meet periodically. Remember you are trying to build a long-term relationship, so be positive, polite and friendly.

You are the expert on the campaign issues so don't be overawed by your MP.

#### **What should you ask your MP to do?**

- Attend and contribute to the Westminster Hall Debate taking place on 3 September 2014
- Write to the minister
- Ask a written or parliamentary question
- Speak in a government or opposition debate
- Participate in local events such as speaking at a meeting; accepting a copy of your alternative prospectus; helping with publicity such as speaking to the local media and showing that they care about the issues.
- Suggest that your MP visits your organisation to pledge their support, see the impact of proposals and find out more about the campaign.