

## How to Engage your Local MP

### Who is your MP?

Identify your MP on <https://members.parliament.uk/members/Commons> by entering in your postcode. When raising issues with parliamentarians try to go through your local MP. A lot of MPs won't engage with campaign issues raised by the general public. At the end of the day MP's are elected by and accountable to their constituents and so if they don't feel like their constituents care about an issue, they are less likely to engage with it.

### Ways to engage your MP:

- Meet your MP in person - every MP holds weekly appointments with constituents in their constituency, called 'surgery appointments'. It should be possible to book in for one of these and speak to your MP in person about an issue you care about. To organise these email your MP directly using the email address that you will find on the below link. Use the top tips in the next section of this document for help.
- Sending correspondence - email or send a letter to your MP using publicly available contact details. You can find this either on your MP's website or on the UK Parliament website here <https://members.parliament.uk/members/Commons>.

### Top tips sending correspondence to your MP

- If sending an email, always have your home address on your email so you can be quickly identified as a constituent
- If you don't get a reply in 2 weeks - send a follow up email asking if the MP has had time to read the email, especially if it's a campaign email which has also been sent by a lot of other constituents - this will help your email to stand out and shows that you actively are very engagement in the issue
- Letter or email? Both should be treated in the same way whether you send a letter or email, if it is about something time sensitive, for example if it is about a piece of legislation that is currently being debated or a news item it is probably best to send as an email so that it is quickly delivered.

# RESULTS

## **What influence does your MP have and what can you ask them to do?**

Different MPs hold different positions in Parliament and how they can raise issues are very different depending on their position. If you know what positions your MP holds you can effectively tailor your message and ask them to use their position to raise your issue in a certain way.

### **A Backbencher**

Backbenchers are MPs that are neither government ministers nor opposition Shadow spokespeople. They are called this because, in the Chamber, they sit in the rows of benches behind their parties' spokespeople who are known as frontbenchers.

Backbenchers play an important role in Parliament, both representing their constituents but also shaping public policy. A key role for backbenchers is to sit on 'committees' which work to examine different Government departments whether it is their spending, policies or administration. The International Development Select Committee for example scrutinises UK overseas aid by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. The Committee launches 'inquiries' on particular topics that they scrutinise, recent examples include how UK Aid is spent in the UK and the FCDO's approach to sexual and reproductive health. The inquiry ends with a report and a set of recommendations which is made publicly available and the Government must respond.

Backbenchers can also make recommendations to Ministers on behalf of their constituents.

### **A Government Minister**

A government minister has the power to shape and determine the direction of their department. They will be responsible for particular areas which you can find by looking at their profile on the website [gov.uk](http://gov.uk).

### **Member of the Shadow Cabinet**

The Shadow Cabinet is appointed by the Leader of the opposition party and usually more or less mimics the different departmental roles in Government, for example there will be the 'Shadow Foreign Secretary' and a team of other shadow ministers with more specific portfolios. The role of a Shadow Minister is to develop alternative policies, hold the government to account for its actions and responses, and act as spokespeople for the opposition party in their own specific policy areas.

# RESULTS

## Spokesperson

Each party has a designated 'spokesperson' who is responsible for communicating the party's position on a specific area. For example the Labour Spokesperson for Health & Social Care is responsible for communicating the party's position on policy areas relating to health such as Labour's policy on NHS health workers pay.