



SAVE OUR YOUTH SERVICES – a fight for common sense

How to lobby your MP locally

It is important that you, your colleagues, friends, neighbours and family contact your MP about your concerns on cuts to young people's services in your area. The more contacts an MP has on the same issue the more likely they are to do something about it.

What is lobbying?

Lobbying is about raising issues with and seeking to influence elected representatives. It can take many different forms and can be done by paid or professional lobbyists or by grass roots activists and members of the public. Lobbying of MPs can take place in Parliament when it is sitting or in a MP's constituency.

A MP will see you as a constituent and as such is meant to represent your interests even if he/she does not agree with them.

How to 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 (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.

What is a constituency 'surgery'?

Don't panic – this has nothing whatsoever to do with politicians carrying out a medical procedure! 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 personal concerns and seek their MP's help with their problems.

Check when and where your MP holds their surgery by accessing the MPs 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.

Supported by:

- Unite • Unison • Sign Community • British Deaf Association • University and College Union • Professional Footballers Association
- Federation of Detached Youth Workers • UK Youth • Media Trust • IDYW - In Defence of Youth Work • Children and Young People Now
- TAG - The Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work • Woodcraft Folk • For Youth's Sake
- navca - National Association of Voluntary and Community Action • Hope not Hate • Youth Action Network • Save our Youth Centres
- NPC - National Pensioners Convention • Musicians' Union • nayceo - National Association of Youth & Community Education Officers
- NCVYS - National Council for Voluntary Youth Services • National Youth Agency • Youth Work Unit • British Youth Council
- NUT - National Union of Teachers • NUS - National Union of Students • UK Youth Parliament • Black Activists Rising Against Cuts

Getting in touch with your MP

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 – all you will need is your postcode.
- The House of Commons Information Office can tell you who your MP is if you call them on 020 7219 4272.

Tell them who you are

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.

Simply state you have concerns about young people's services and the cuts that are taking place. Do say that you are a youth worker or service user if that is the case.

Please let us know if you have managed to arrange a meeting with your MP (and who your MP is) by emailing kerry.jenkins@unitetheunion.org

When you see your MP

It is best to assume that your MP will not know too much 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.

Use these handy tips to get your message 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 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 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.
- 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 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.

Good luck!