

## How to lobby your MP

Meeting your MP is a powerful campaigning tool, says **Ben Clowney**. Your views are heard, and your MP will respond – they may write to government ministers, raise the issue in Parliament or talk to local media. Whatever their priorities, it's their job to pass on your concerns.

### How-to guide

#### Step 1: Arrange a meeting

Even the busiest MPs are keen to hear from constituents. For maximum impact, meet before an election or key decision-making moment. Here are the best ways to meet them:

- **At their surgery:** Most MPs run regular advice surgeries in their constituencies. Phone in advance to say you're coming. If they don't do surgeries, ask for an appointment.
- **At a lobbying event:** Events like the recent *Stop Climate Chaos* 'speed lobby' give you the opportunity to discuss an issue with your MP.
- **At your own event:** Are you running an event and inviting local media? Your MP might be keen to attend and show support for a development issue.

#### Step 2: Invite others

Joining with other constituents will demonstrate support for the issue you're raising. Start by contacting your Tearfund Regional Manager – visit [www.tearfund.org/volunteering](http://www.tearfund.org/volunteering) for details. They or your local volunteer campaigns promoter might want to join you, or will suggest other Tearfund supporters in your constituency to contact. Tell other campaigning groups in the area too.

#### Step 3: Prepare

It's highly likely you'll know more than your MP about the issue, but it's important to prepare, particularly focusing on common responses to your position. Narrow your argument down to three or four main points, and know them well. Visit [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) to check your MP's views. Finally, prepare one side of A4 outlining your key points and hand this over at the start of the meeting.

#### Step 4: The meeting

If you've not met your MP before, it may seem a scary prospect. But just remember – they'll be pleased to see you, and they won't be expecting a development expert. Begin by explaining who you are and why you've come, outlining your main points. Note their responses. If conversation wanders, remind your MP that time is short, and make sure you get back to your agenda. If you can't answer a question, don't panic – simply say you'll get back to them. MPs are usually keen to have a photo and write-up in local media, so if you feel able to, offer to write a press release; let them do it if you can't. As you conclude the meeting, be clear what you're asking them to do, confirm this with them and mention that you'll pray for them.

#### Step 5: Follow-up

Write a letter of thanks, reminding them of your discussions and their promises. Encourage others in your constituency who share your concern to send a letter too. Write a press release if your MP agreed; just ensure it's checked by their office before you send it to local media. Later, if you feel there's been insufficient progress or your MP hasn't kept their word, send them a note reminding them of their promises. Finally, we'd love to hear how you get on – email us at [campaigning@tearfund.org](mailto:campaigning@tearfund.org) to let us know.

