

# How to lobby your MP



## **This briefing aims to:**

- identify the ways you can lobby your MP
- give guidance on procedures for getting into the Palace of Westminster
- give advice on disabled access
- give information about the TUC's 'All together for public services' lobby at the Palace of Westminster on 19 October 2010 and at MPs' surgeries on 22 and 23 October 2010.

## **How to lobby your MP**

There are several ways to lobby your MP:

- make an appointment to meet your MP at the Palace of Westminster
- make an appointment to meet your MP at the constituency office
- make an appointment to meet your MP outside of the Palace of Westminster
- green card your MP at Parliament
- write to your MP.

## **Appointments: in the Palace of Westminster, outside the Palace of Westminster and at the constituency office/surgery**

The easiest way to make an appointment for any of the above locations is to call the constituency office as MPs receive a lot of letters and might not reply to you quickly enough.

If your MP is a minister, the constituency office is still the best route to secure an appointment rather than through their ministerial department. Constituency office details should be available on the MP's website, which you can search for at [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com).

When calling the constituency office, ask to speak to the MP's diary secretary, explain you live in the constituency and you'd like a brief meeting to discuss your topic. You will have to specify if you wish to meet in the Palace, outside the Palace (such as Portcullis House) or at the constituency office/during a surgery. It's really only necessary to meet outside the Palace when there's an organised lobby as security restricts numbers to 100 lobbyists at any one time.

If you prefer to put your request in writing, you can send a letter to your MP at the House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA. Most MPs also accept emails as the same as a letter. Details of MPs and Lords can be found at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk) as well as [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com) or you can call the House of Commons Information Office on 020 7219 4272, quoting your address and postcode.

Keep your letter or email simple and polite, asking for a meeting date and time (or in the case of an organised lobby, stating you would like to meet them on a certain date

and time) and saying if you're coming on your own or in a group. Make it clear you are a constituent of the MP.

Once you have a written confirmation of your appointment, you must take this with you to the Palace to ensure a quicker entry process.

If you're meeting your MP in the central lobby or elsewhere in the Palace, go to the ramped entrance to the left of St Stephen's entrance. Before queuing for security checks, inform a police officer you have written confirmation of your appointment, and you should bypass the general public lining up for tours.

After clearing security, which can take 15 minutes or more on a busy day and will be slowed down by large bags, you will be routed up a flight of stairs to the central lobby. Go to the reception desk and ask for your MP who will come and get you in person or will send a staff member.

If you're meeting your MP at Portcullis House, you will go through security checks there but it should take less time.

### **Green card**

The green card system allows you to request a meeting with your MP at the Palace of Westminster without an appointment.

Entering the Palace without an appointment is through a separate entrance next to St Stephen's. After clearing security at the Palace, head for the central lobby and to the reception desk where you ask for a green card. Fill in your name, address, MP's name and a clear statement on your purpose of visit.

Return the card to the reception desk and the staff will then go and find your MP, and call you over the tannoy when they have located your MP.

If your MP is not in the House, the card will be passed to him or her and you should receive a written response to your statement. Therefore a brief but accurate statement of the purpose of your visit is vital on the green card.

The green card system is not the most effective way of meeting your MP as many travel down from constituencies on Monday then head back on Thursday with various sessions and meetings in and out of the House during the week, which means they might not be available when you turn up.

Also, if you want to visit your MP as part of an organised lobby, you might have to wait a while in the queue with your fellow lobbyists while they see the same MP.

### **Disabled access**

If you are disabled, telephone the Serjeant-at-Arms office at the House of Commons who will advise you on access to the building. Call main switchboard on 020 7219 3000 and ask for the office. There is some parking available although the office needs notification in advance. Your MP should accompany you once you're within the building, but again the MP's office must know your needs in advance.

### **Write to your MP**

You can outline your concerns about government policies or local issues in a letter to your MP at either their Parliamentary or constituency address. Although it will take time, your MP should reply with a fairly full explanation of where they stand on a particular issue.

### **Rally and lobby on 19 October**

As part of the TUC's 'All together for public services campaign', members of public sector unions are invited to attend a rally at Westminster Central Hall from 12.30pm followed by a lobby of MPs at 2.30pm.

The TUC has organised for each MP to receive one group of members from a range of public sector unions who can articulate how the proposed cuts will directly affect them and the services they provide. Each MP has been written to by Brendan Barber so they should be expecting your group.

To join the group destined for your MP, contact Mark Holding at [mholding@atl.org.uk](mailto:mholding@atl.org.uk).

Two rooms in the House of Commons have been booked for lobbyists: committee rooms 9 and 10 are in the main Palace of Westminster, booked in the name of Frank Doran MP and Tony Lloyd MP. No banners or placards will be allowed inside the Palace, but can be held while in the queue and given to a TUC steward. Bags can be left at the cloakroom at Westminster Central Hall.

### **Meetings at MPs' constituency offices/surgeries on 22 and 23 October**

Following 19 October's rally and lobby, members are encouraged to make an appointment to meet their MP in their constituency. Please let Mark Holding know if you meet your MP at [mholding@atl.org.uk](mailto:mholding@atl.org.uk).