

8 - Lobbying

Lobbying is an effective way to put pressure on your local MP or MEP about the issues you are interested in. For example, the Trade Justice Movement and the Drop the Debt campaign have used lobbying very effectively, so it's an area your group can make a difference in! You can also lobby on campus - for example your Vice Chancellor or you can lobby a particular government minister.

We're using 'MP' to refer to MSPs/AMs/MEPs as well. For specific information on about how procedures differ for the non-Westminster parliaments please give us a ring in the office!

**This section covers letter writing, MP's surgeries, petitions,
Open Meetings and photo opportunities!**

Letter-Writing

Letter writing is a very effective way of campaigning! When writing your letters, remember:

- Be polite and stick to the point.
- Give the person you are lobbying a good reason to listen to you (your potential vote?!).
- Keep a file your letters and any replies you receive.

The following pages show some examples of letters to MPs. The first is a serious letter, inviting your MP to attend a session of the All Party Parliamentary Group on HIV/AIDS and shows the format to be used. The second is a valentine's card for MPs, to give an idea of the type of gimmick it is possible to use.

Your address
Important so that they
Know you live in their
Constituency

(<http://www.locata.co.uk/commons> - put in your postcode and they'll tell you who)

MPs Name
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Student Stop AIDS Campaign
Unite to Fight AIDS Tour
All Party Parliamentary Group on HIV/AIDS
October 22nd, 10.30 to 11.30 am
Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House

Dear

I am writing to ask you to attend the above session of the All Party Parliamentary Group on HIV/AIDS. As a young person living in your constituency, I feel that that the effect of HIV and AIDS on young people in the UK and around the world is not accorded sufficient priority.

Young people are at the centre of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. An estimated 11.8 million people aged between 15 and 24 are living with HIV/AIDS, and half of all new infections - almost 7000 daily - occur among young people.

The session will give you an opportunity to listen to young people from the UK and Africa who are directly affected by HIV and AIDS and hear how they are at the centre of fighting the pandemic.

The recent Health Select Committee report recognises the need for increased political will and changes in public policy to ensure that young people are informed and empowered to make choices that will enable them to protect themselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

At a global level, the critical role of young people in turning the epidemic around has been recognised by UN agencies. Member states are committed to reducing infection rates and increasing young people's access to information and services.

I urge you to attend the session. If you are unable to attend I would be happy to provide you with a briefing and meet with you to discuss my concerns about these important issues.

Best wishes

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Love in the Time Of...

HIV/AIDS

Dear _____ MP,

*This Valentine's Day
8,200 people will die from AIDS.
Show Your Care By Increasing Access to Care
and Treatment.*

Lobby to:

- ❖ *Treat 3 million by 2005*
 - ❖ *Ensure Access to Cheap ARVs*
 - ❖ *Pay our fair share to the Global Fund*
- Love,*

*Please inform me by return post what you will do in 2004
To increase access to care and treatment.*

Name:

Email:

Address:

Your MP can help you by doing the following things.

- Ask oral questions: these are tabled two weeks in advance to a Government department and are drawn by ballot. There is only time for 10 - 15 questions to be answered.
- Ask written questions: they can ask an unlimited number of written questions, usually to elicit information from a Government department. This can be done on your behalf.
- Write to a Government Minister/European Commissioner on your behalf.
- Sign up to an Early Day Motion (a kind of parliamentary petition).

You will often receive a standard reply, so ask specific questions and ask your MP's personal opinion to get a better response. You can also send a follow-up letter if you feel that they haven't answered your questions adequately!!

MP's Surgeries

You can arrange a face to face meeting at your MP's surgery for their constituents. Find in the details in your local paper or from the constituency office (details in the phone book). You can try and make an appointment in advance, but you may have to wait your turn.

Before the meeting

- Make sure you are well prepared - but don't worry, it's likely you will know more about the issue than your MP!
- Meetings are usually informal and last for 10 to 15 minutes - so you don't need to make a long presentation!
- Get together beforehand (a group of up to 3 or 4 is usual) and decide which aspects of the issue each of you will concentrate on, so you each get a chance to speak.

During the meeting

- Ask your MP to do something specific (if appropriate).
- Take brief notes on what your MP is saying.
- Take along any information you feel is suitable to give to your MP and offer to send more if requested.

After the meeting

- **Note down anything the MP agreed to or refused to do and see if it is of interest to the media.**
- **Write a short letter to thank your MP for seeing you.**
- **Keep up the dialogue** - react to events and campaign initiatives with further letters and arrange another meeting if you haven't received the response you want.

Contact details

You can find your MP, MSP, AM or MEP's address through the following sources:



MPs

Post: write to them at House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA,
Or call 020 7219 3000 for their constituency address
Full details: look at <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/alms.htm>
Fax: from www.faxyourmp.com

MEPs

Post: write to them at European Parliament UK Office, 2 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA
Or call 020 7227 4300 for their constituency address
Full details: look at http://www.europarl.org.uk/uk_meps/MembersMain.htm

MSPs

Post: write to them at The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP,
Or call 0131 348 5817 for their constituency address
e-mail: firstname.surname.msp@scottish.parliament.uk
Full details: look at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/msps/msps.html> (click on "biography")

AMs

Post: write to them at National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff CF99 1NA
Or call 029 20 825111 for their constituency address
Alternatively look at http://www.wales.gov.uk/who/constit_e.htm

Petitioning

- Encourage people to write letters as well, since individual letters will receive more attention than signatures. You could also use pre-printed postcards and standard letters for people to sign, which are both useful and more impressive than just signatures.
- Give people more information at your stall so that they can continue to take action
- Don't forget to have spare petitions for people to take away. Make sure they have a return address and return date clearly shown on them.
- It is worth trying to get your student, or local, paper to print a petition form in the newspaper. Again make sure it is clear when it needs to be returned by, and to where.

Open Meetings

MPs will regularly attend local meetings and functions. Go along and ask questions and hand out leaflets. You could also organise your own public meeting and ask your MP to be a speaker. Make sure you book a venue you can fill! Send out a press release for added impact. Don't forget to make public any promises s/he makes!

The Photo Opportunity

Arrange a photo opportunity for your student or local paper and invite your MP to attend - it could be as simple as getting them to a street stall to sign your petition. Make it more interesting by having a giant petition to sign, preferably with a giant pen! Take your own camera in case the press don't turn up!

Be persistent, and follow up.

Send more letters, arrange more meetings or actions if necessary-.remember, lobbying is a cumulative process. Your individual action may not seem much but combined with the efforts of others all over the country **you will be making a difference!**

GOOD LUCK!

If you need any help or advice, please contact us on 0207 222 0138 or at spwnetwork@gn.apc.org

Remember! -Don't take on too much! Think about what you can realistically achieve and make full use of the resources available to you – e.g. Speakers, websites, email lists, delegating tasks, to make sure that your group is effective but fun!

Thank you!

