

## 4in10: The London End Child Poverty Project: Campaigners Toolkit 3 Lobbying Your Way to Success

This short guide contains information on lobbying decision makers. Direct lobbying is the least resource consuming and most direct way of campaigning and so should always be looked upon as a favourable option.

### What is lobbying?

Lobbying is **the practice of influencing decisions made by government**. This can be any level of government and as you can see below London has a three-tiered system. This can be done by individuals, by other decision makers, by constituents or by organised groups.



Young Campaigners at Keep the Promise, the march and rally coordinated by End Child Poverty and attended by over 10,000 supporters on October 4<sup>th</sup> 2008

### Who to Lobby

When lobbying a decision or policy maker you should always begin from first principles. **Know what you want to change, and then look to see who has the power to implement this.** Much of the time this will be a political decision maker, such as a councillor or an MP.

However it is also possible that the person who has the power to instigate your change may be a business or other organisation. For example, if you are campaigning for improved working conditions for parents you may want to *directly* approach a specific business. This is not strictly lobbying but many of the following suggestions still apply, although as businesses are unelected you will need to demonstrate a reason other than one linked to voter support for a company to act, such as a potential financial gain.

London is governed by three levels of administration; **National, Regional and Borough**, which can lead to confusion over who is responsible for what. At each level, elected officials represent the needs of their constituency and help develop future strategies and policies. Each of your representatives (outlined below) will be particularly interested in issues relating to your constituency or ward.

## National Decision Makers:

Who	What do they do?	What to contact them about:	How to contact them:
<b>Members of Parliament (MPs)</b>	<p>They are elected to represent the views of their constituency in National Government.</p> <p>Essentially they are <b>Lawmakers</b>.</p> <p>MPs cannot directly influence the policies of the Local Authority.</p>	<p>The most effective way to influence national policy and governance is to contact the MP for your constituency.</p> <p>Write to your MP with concerns both at a national and constituency level, or contact them to arrange a meeting.</p>	<p>London has 74 MPs, each representing one constituency.</p> <p>You can find your MP using the following:</p> <p>House of Commons Information Office: Tel: 020 7219 4272 <a href="http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/commons/">http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/commons/</a></p> <p>MPs also have ‘surgeries’ which are times you can drop in on them or book an appointment to discuss whatever concerns you think they will be able to help with.</p> <p>When and where these are held can be found on your MP’s website or by calling their office.</p>

## London Decision Makers

Who?	What do they do?	What to contact them about:	How to contact them:
<p><b>Greater London Authority (GLA):</b> The GLA is a democratically-elected strategic authority governing London. It is comprised of two distinct parts: the Mayor and the Assembly. The GLA's principal purposes are to promote economic, environmental and social development in London.</p>	<p><b>Mayor</b></p> <p>The Mayor has an executive role and sets the overall vision for London. He is the key <b>Decision Maker</b> in the GLA. The Mayor is responsible for defining clear strategies on a range of issues affecting London, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Air quality</li> <li>▪ Spatial Development</li> <li>▪ Culture and Tourism</li> <li>▪ Economic Development</li> <li>▪ Transport</li> <li>▪ Waste</li> </ul>	<p>The Public Liaison Unit (rather than the Mayor) responds to all enquiries made directly to the Mayor. Therefore the best way to influence GLA policy is to write to/ meet with your local Assembly Member who can raise your issues/ comments at the proceeding policy meeting.</p>	<p>The Mayor of London is Boris Johnson:</p> <p>Boris Johnson Mayor of London Greater London Authority City Hall The Queen's Walk More London London SE1 2AA</p> <p>Tel: 020 7983 4100 Email: <a href="mailto:mayor@london.gov.uk">mayor@london.gov.uk</a></p>
	<p><b>Assembly Members (AMs)</b></p> <p>The Assembly works by directly questioning the Mayor about his activities, strategies and decisions. They are responsible for <b>scrutiny</b> of his decisions. The Assembly also publishes the findings and recommendations from its investigations and makes proposals to the Mayor.</p>	<p>Contact your local Assembly Member to arrange a meeting or to voice your concerns about your assembly constituency and London as a whole.</p>	<p>London has 25 Assembly Members. 14 of these members are specific to a constituency (made up of 2/3 London boroughs). A further 11 Assembly Members are elected on a London-wide basis. You will have most influence over your constituency Assembly Member.</p> <p>You can find your Assembly Member using the following:</p> <p>Greater London Authority General Enquiries: Tel: 020 7983 4000 <a href="http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/lams_facts_cont.jsp">http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/lams_facts_cont.jsp</a></p>

## Borough Decision Makers

Who?	What do they do?	What to contact them about:	How to contact them:
<b>Councillors</b>	<p>Councillors are the <b>elected, unpaid representatives on the borough council</b> who define the work that paid council officers carry out. Each councillor represents an area of the borough known as a ward.</p> <p>Councillors are directly responsible for making decisions on behalf of the local community about most <b>day-to-day local services</b>. Examples of these are children's services which include education, adult social services, council housing, and leisure facilities.</p> <p>Three boroughs in London (Hackney, Lewisham and Newham) also have directly-elected Mayors, the rest have a leader appointed by his or her fellow councillors.</p>	<p>You can contact your local councillor about relevant issues to your particular ward and the wider borough, in order to influence decisions made by the council and Council Leader/Mayor.</p> <p>It is also worth finding out what other roles, if any, your councillor has. The governing part of the council is called the <b>Executive</b> and alongside the Head of the Council consists of councillors who are Heads of different departments, for example Housing.</p> <p>You can attend most meetings of the council, although you will usually not be able to speak at them.</p>	<p>There are 32 London boroughs and the Corporation of London, with a total of 1,861 elected councillors.</p> <p>You can find out who your local councillors are using the following:</p> <p><a href="http://www.writetothem.com/">http://www.writetothem.com/</a></p> <p>Or by contacting your local council.</p> <p>Councillors also have regular <b>Surgeries</b> which are opportunities for constituents to bring up issues with their councillor. Details of when and where these are will be available from your local council.</p>

## How to Lobby

### Direct Contact

The most effective way to influence decision makers is to contact them directly, ideally in person or if not by telephone, email or letter. Your local MP and councillors are elected by people like you; you therefore have the power to influence them. It is the voters who decide if elected officials keep their jobs and because of this they will always listen to what you have to say. Both MPs and councillors have 'surgeries'; these are essentially drop-in opportunities for members of the public to speak with them and offer a good opportunity for campaigners to put forward their cause.

## Demonstrate Public Concern

Decision makers will be most moved to act in favour of your cause if you can **demonstrate public concern** which is **widespread** and/or **deeply held**. The amount of concern you need to demonstrate for the decision maker to take action will depend on the exact circumstances.

- It may be enough for you to demonstrate your own personal concern, hinting that this is more widespread, if the decision maker is concerned that this will become more pervasive if unchecked. This is one of founder of the Community Organising Movement Saul Alinsky's 'Rules for Radicals' known as '**Anticipatory Democracy**': "The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself".
- Alternatively, you can demonstrate public support by getting others to accompany you to your meeting, by getting others to have their own meeting on the same subject with the decision maker, or simply by organising a **petition** of those who agree with you which you can take along.
- Organising a large show of public support, such as a rally, will make it more likely that decision makers will meet with and listen to you. This is a public campaigning tactic and more information can be found in Toolkit 4.

## Barriers

Possible barriers to a decision maker taking the action you suggest may be:

1. That **other influences** are exerting pressure for the decision maker to take the opposite action to the one you are suggesting (e.g. The political party they represent, financial constraints or lobbying pressure in the opposite direction)
2. That they hold a **personal opinion** which conflicts with the action you would like them to take

To take these possible barriers into account it is best to always **research** a little into the decision maker before approaching them. Try to find out what their specialist areas are, what they do, what committees they are on, and whether they have any special interest in child poverty or your specific area of concern (for example overcrowded social housing). You will then be in a much better position to frame your ask in terms which they are more likely to agree to.

## The Communication

When communicating with policy makers you must bear in mind that they need **specifics** – they need to know:

- **Exactly what causes the problem:**  
For example: A lack of social housing in the borough, leading to overcrowding and many families spending extensive periods in temporary accommodation while on housing lists.

- **Clear evidence to back up the case:**  
For example: Local reports of numbers of families overcrowded & research from national homelessness charity Shelter linking overcrowding to problems such as ill health and low educational achievement.
- **Proposed solutions:**  
For example: That the council increases the proportion of social housing in planned new building in the borough, by giving planning permission to Housing Associations who provide social housing rather than private developers planning luxury apartments.

You may find the following websites useful in finding evidence to back up your ask:

[www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/london](http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/london) : Provides child poverty statistics in your area.

[www.go-london.gov.uk/boroughinfo/](http://www.go-london.gov.uk/boroughinfo/) : Provides information and statistics about your borough including the Index of Deprivation 2007.

## Keep in Close Contact with the London Campaigns Officer

4in10 can support you with your campaigning activities in many ways, and can advertise this both to members and online. Get in touch by phone or email to discuss your ideas and find out how the 4in10 team can help, from providing further resources to linking you up with other campaigners in your area.

**Please remember to let us know what you are planning – Particularly if you want to campaign on behalf of 4in10: The End Child Poverty London Project.**

**Your campaigning has the potential to make a difference to thousands of children living in poverty in your local area – Why not begin now?**