

Top tips on how to lobby your elected representatives

You have the power to influence decision-makers by contacting your Member of Parliament, Member of Scottish Parliament, Northern Irish and Welsh Assembly Members or local Councillors and making them aware of your views on child poverty.

Make an appointment to go and see them. Use our “they say, we say” resource to ensure you are equipped with all the arguments. If you can’t make an appointment with your MP, MSP, AM or Cllr then write to them, you are entitled to a reply.

Visiting your MP, MSP or AM; make an appointment through their constituency office, or by emailing them. You can also visit them through their local “surgeries”, again you can find out when and where these take place through their constituency or local council offices.

Before your meeting

- **Do your research**

Your meeting will be more effective if you do some preparation. Try and find out what they have previously said, done or signed on the issue. Look at their biography and website, to find out their areas of special interest.

- **Who to lobby**

It is likely that you will find that there are several different people that you wish to lobby. It is best to approach the MP, MSP, AM or Councillor for your ward in the first instance as they are there to represent you. Also remember that many councils have children’s services departments and education/welfare committees that may be particularly interested in the issue.

- **Make sure you are well prepared**

But remember you don’t *have* to be an expert - you just need to be willing to ask questions, and be able to explain why you think it’s an important issue for them to address. Remember you will often know far more than your elected representatives on the issue as they have to be informed on so many different things. Take some ECP campaign materials and publications, to leave with them.

- **Local links**

All elected representatives are interested in their constituencies and the more you can localise your evidence, the better incentives they have to support you campaign. Use our website to find out about child poverty statistics in your area.

- **Plan your roles as a group**

If you are in a group, decide on whether you will make individual appointments or go together as a party (normally not more than 3 or 4). Get together beforehand and decide which aspects of the issue each of you will concentrate on. It is often a good idea to have one person making notes. Have some practice sessions beforehand to make sure your message comes across as clearly as possible.

During the Meeting

- **Don't get sidetracked**

State your concerns clearly, stick to the issue and try not to get diverted into general a debate. Be aware of time so that you can make sure you cover all the points you wish to make.

- **Take brief notes on what they say.**

Keep a record of anything they agreed to during the course of your meeting. Let us know what they say - what action they may have agreed to take, or any areas they disagreed on. This is important to help with the future development of the campaign.

- **Give a consistent message**

If you are visiting as a member of a group, don't disagree with each other during the course of the meeting as it detracts from the overall message. Offer to send further information if necessary.

- **It's not just about *what* you say...**

It's how you say it... The way you communicate your message is almost as important as what it is. Be confident and assertive but stay calm and polite.

- **Try to leave with an agreement on the specific action they will take for you**

Let them know that you will be interested to see their progress and that you will be writing to them again to follow up this meeting.

Don't forget to ask them to:

- **Come to the Keep the Promise event on October 4th in Trafalgar Square.**
- **Be part of a local event to promote the Keep the Promise : End Child Poverty campaign.**
- **See if they would be willing to ask a question on the issue either in their parliament or assembly or in writing to the PM. We can help draft a question for them to ask if necessary.**
- **Contact their party champion on child poverty to get involved.**

After the meeting

- **Write and thank your elected representative and let us know what the outcome of the meeting was**

This letter is also a good opportunity to restate any key points and remind them of any action they agreed to take.

- **Keep up the dialogue**

Keep them informed about events and campaign initiatives with further letters highlighting developments and news stories.

- **Think about media opportunities**

If the MP has agreed *or refused* to do something, see if it is of interest to the local media.

- **Be persistent**

If you don't get the response you want, be persistent. Go and meet your MP again and keep up the letter-writing. If you build a relationship with your MP, you'll make more of an impression.



Letters to elected representatives

If you are unable to make an appointment with your MP, MSP, AM or Cllr then write to them, you are entitled to a reply.

- Persuade them to support the Campaign to End Child Poverty.
- Get them to raise or to back the issue within their parties and during debates in their parliament or assembly.

It is important to plan your letter carefully. *Remember to:*

- Either type the letter or use blue or black ink on white paper.
- Be concise and be clear in your argument.
- Give background information about child poverty and the issue concerned.

Remember to feed back on any activity you are carrying out and the commitments you have secured to the Campaign team.

Model Letter

Insert address
Telephone number
Date

Dear

In 1999 the Government made a historic pledge to end child poverty by 2020 and halve it by 2010. Since then 600,000 children have been lifted out of poverty, but unfortunately progress has stalled and in the last two years 200,000 children have fallen back into poverty. Without significant pressure, the government is in danger of missing the 2010 target. With your support we can ensure that the Government keep the promise of a generation and end child poverty:

The Campaign to End Child Poverty is a growing coalition of over 130 charities, social justice groups, faith groups, trade unions and other organisations and individuals working to put pressure on the UK government to Keep their Promise. Our efforts will culminate in a rally held in Trafalgar Square on October 4th- the UK's biggest ever event to end child poverty to demonstrate that failure to keep the promise is not a political option.

Growing up in poverty hurts and currently 1 in 3 children in the UK are living in poverty. End Child Poverty are asking the Prime Minister to keep the Government's commitment to the millions of children living in poverty, by ensuring the necessary investment of £3 billion is made in the next Budget.

As my elected representative, I would like to ask you **(delete as appropriate)** for a meeting to discuss the issue of child poverty / to attend the October 4th rally in Trafalgar Square / raise awareness of child poverty levels in our constituency / put pressure on the Government to keep their promise.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

INSERT Your Name