



# GUIDE

## TO MEETING YOUR MP

End Hunger UK aims to persuade the Government to take responsibility for tackling the causes of food insecurity. To do that, we need MPs of all parties to support our call for action. And to persuade MPs to get involved, we need local people in their constituencies to meet with them. This booklet includes lots of ideas to help you arrange a meeting with your MP - and to make the most of that meeting.

### Why meet your MP?

MPs say that meeting face to face is one of the best ways for constituents to lobby them. They are keen to hear how issues affect constituents, and how they can help. They are also very busy, with lots of competing demands on their time.

(A **constituency** is the area that the MP is responsible for. If live in that area, you are the MP's **constituent**. Their job is to represent you and deal with your concerns. You are important to them because you can vote for them –or not!)



## Before the meeting

- Decide who is going to go to the meeting, what you are going to talk about, and what you are going to ask your MP to do. If you are going as a group, you need to include someone who lives or works in their constituency – for example, someone who volunteers at a foodbank there.
- Prepare what you want to say:
  - The facts relating to your issue – particularly any local stats if you have them – and how it affects people (i.e. the **problem**).
  - What you're going to ask them to do (as part of the solution) – this is the **ask**. It is best to ask them to do just one thing.
  - Think about what they might say in response and how you might counter any challenges to your arguments.
- Find out who your MP is by entering your postcode at [www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps](http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps)
- Find out about your MP and their interests:
  - Have they spoken about the issue before? You can find out by searching Hansard (<https://hansard.parliament.uk>) – this is a written record of everything that is said in the House of Commons.
  - Check out their website or Twitter feed.
  - Are they a member of any relevant committees? You can find out at [www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps](http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps)
  - What is their voting record? You can find out lots on the [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) website.
- Make an appointment to meet them. You can arrange to meet them either in London from Monday to Thursday, or on a Friday or Saturday when they are back in their constituencies. They hold 'surgeries' where they make themselves available to meet up with their constituents.
- Prepare a short document setting out what you want to say. This is helpful in case you forget, but also because sometimes meetings get cut short (for example if an MP has to go off and vote). Having something to leave behind is really helpful.

## During the meeting

- Keep it short and simple – stick to one main issue.
- Introduce yourself or remind them where you've met before, if you have; state what you want and why. Cover the problem, the solution, and what they can do to help (the **ask**).
- Address any counter-arguments head on.
- If your MP asks any questions you can't answer, you can offer to go away and find out, and follow up in writing.
- Be very clear about what you want them to do.
- Use any personal experience you're happy to share. Tell them about the experiences of people in their constituency.
- At the end, repeat what exactly you're asking for and how you'll follow up.
- For example: "So, to sum up, we would like you to ask a question in Parliament about how many children who are eligible for free school meals are able to access holiday food and activity programmes. We'll arrange to come back and see you in two months to find out how you got on."
- Discuss anything you want to do to publicise the meeting (e.g. writing to your local paper, tweeting), and take a photograph if you can. Send the photo to us, and we'll use it on End Hunger UK social media!

## After the meeting

- Write to thank them for meeting you, and provide a note of what was agreed.
- If they don't get back to you, write to them to follow it up.

## What can I ask an MP to do?

MPs can feel frustrated if constituents don't have a clear idea about what exactly they are asking for. Before your meeting, have a think about what action you would like your MP to take. What would you like your MP to agree to do and by when? How would you like your MP to feel about a particular issue by the end of your conversation?

One MP alone can't solve food poverty, but there is a lot they can do using their role as a Member of Parliament. You can ask your MP to...

- **Pass a letter onto Government.** Don't be put off if this is all your MP agrees to do, as receiving letters from local constituents gives an indication to ministers what the public is concerned about.
- **Internal Lobbying.** In addition to passing a letter on your behalf to the relevant minister in Government, an MP could write a letter themselves or set up a private meeting with the relevant minister (and invite you to it!)

FOR  
EXAMPLE

**A group of people in Leeds - End Hunger Leeds - went to see, one by one, all the MPs in the city to talk about how Universal Credit is causing food poverty.**

**As a result of the meetings, two of the Conservative MPs, Alec Shelbrooke and Stuart Andrews, went together to see the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Esther McVey, to talk about Universal Credit.**

- **Submit an Early Day Motion (EDM).** This is a kind of written statement that an MP can submit for debate. Even if the motion is not debated, it is an opportunity for an MP to put their opinion on record and draw attention to a particular topic. Other MPs can add their name to an EDM to show their support. It's a good way of raising the profile of an issue and getting a feel for what MPs think about it. You can see any EDMs that your MP has submitted at <https://edm.parliament.uk>

FOR  
EXAMPLE

**MP Jack Cunningham 'tabled' this Early Day Motion on 9 April 2019:**

**That this House notes that a growing number of people are becoming reliant on foodbanks across many areas of the country; condemns the institutionalisation of foodbanks in the UK; and urges the Government to tackle low-paying jobs and carry out an urgent review of Universal Credit and if the Government cannot perform a review, it should be replaced by a fair benefits system.**

- **Use their high-profile position** to raise the profile of the issue of food poverty by speaking at events or in schools, writing an article in the local media, or putting information on their website.
- **Raise an issue at Parliament** by submitting a question, speaking during a relevant debate, or even calling a debate themselves.
- **Campaign on a local or national issue.** Locally, for example, an MP could campaign for extending free school meals to ???

## Choosing your 'ask'

Your MP is more likely to come away from your meeting with the motivation to take action if they have been presented with an 'ask' that they are happy to put their name on. Some things to consider when choosing your ask are:

**Are you starting small?** In order to build a long-lasting relationship with your MP, it is wise to start small with your ask. As your relationship grows stronger and mutual trust is established, you can begin to challenge your MP with bigger asks. Start with something that you know your MP will be able to achieve, so you can thank them and build a good rapport.

FOR  
EXAMPLE

**If you are focusing on child food insecurity, you could ask an MP to go and make time to eat with children, for example at a school breakfast club, during a school dinner time, or at a holiday food and activity scheme. Could you set the meetings up for them and go along too?**

**This would be good publicity for them, would also give them an insight into the issue, and would help build a relationship between you and the MP.**

**Is it popular?** An MP will be less willing to do something if they think it will be unpopular in the constituency. Think about the positive publicity they may be able to get by taking positive action on child food insecurity. Ultimately, it is your MP's role to represent the views of the whole constituency, so they are unlikely to respond to an ask that would directly conflict with the immediate needs of local people.

**Is it in line with their values?** Frame your ask around your MP's main interests and values. If your MP has a position in cabinet, you could frame your ask around their role.

You can find out more information about how to research your MP's interests at [theyworkforyou.com](https://theyworkforyou.com)

FOR  
EXAMPLE

**You could ask the Minister for Work and Pensions to look at the five-week wait for Universal Credit.**

**Are they equipped for it?** Is the action feasible for them to do? Do they need further information, for example a briefing, from you in order to be able to take this action forward?

**Is it grounded in the local?** Ultimately your MP is meeting you as a local politician who is representing the local area.

FOR  
EXAMPLE

**If you are talking about a national problem such as the children of people seeking asylum not having access to free school meals, then give some examples of children in your area and what they are experiencing.**



End Hunger UK is supported by many national organisations, including:



Church Action on Poverty



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND



OXFAM



- Baptists Together
- Caritas Social Action Network
- The Church of Scotland
- First Steps Nutrition
- Food Bank As It Is
- Food Ethics Council
- Food Matters
- Magic Breakfast
- The Methodist Church
- Quaker Peace and Social Witness
- The United Reformed Church

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[www.endhungeruk.org](http://www.endhungeruk.org)