

# How to hold a successful meeting with your MP

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Developing long-lasting relationships with Members of Parliament has been one of the key components of RESULTS' success over the last 30 years. Organising regular face-to-face meetings with your MP is one of the most effective ways to build a long-lasting and impactful relationship.

## ▶ Getting the meeting

**01 Know who your MP is.** Parliamentary convention means that MPs will generally only deal with concerns raised by their own constituents. If you are not sure who your MP is, you can find out through this website: [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com). You will need to enter your full postcode.

**02 Find out when and how you can meet you MP.** Most MPs hold regular meetings with their constituents. These sessions are often referred to as 'surgeries'. It is up to each MP to decide whether they hold surgeries, how many and in what location(s). They are usually held on Fridays or over the weekend after the MP has returned from Westminster. The best way to find out about your own MP's surgery times is to look on their website or call the constituency office (you can find these details using the website link mentioned above). Surgery details may also be published in your local newspaper or public library. If you live in or near to London, you also have the option of making an appointment to meet your MP in the House of Commons when Parliament is sitting.

**03 Book your meeting.** Call your MP's office and ask to make an appointment. Remember to ask how long your appointment is likely to be so that you can plan accordingly. You may be asked to give a short summary of the issue that you would like to raise so that your MP can be prepared. You should also say if you are planning to bring anyone else along to the meeting with you.

## ▶ Before the meeting

**01 Do your research.** Find out what issues your MP cares about and whether (s)he has taken an active interest in international development, either inside or outside of Parliament. You can find this information by reading their biography and researching which committees they sit on in Parliament and what issues they regularly speak about. Also [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) contains lots of information about your MP's responsibilities in parliament and their voting record, so you can see which issues matter to them. Contact the RESULTS office if you would like help gathering this information.

**02 Prepare an agenda.** Plan in advance how you would like to structure your meeting. You might find it helpful to prepare an outline of the key points that you would like to make, in case of the event that the conversation goes off in an unexpected direction and you need a prompt to get back to the topic of the meeting. It is also useful to have an outline with you in case your mind goes blank on the day!

**03 Agree roles.** If more than one person is attending the meeting, make sure you agree in advance who will be saying what as well as who will take notes, keep time, etc.

**04 Practice speaking.** Create a brief two or three minute laser talk to quickly, but powerfully, introduce the issue to your MP. After you have prepared your laser talk, make sure to practice it with at least one other person so that you are confident on the day. Be brief, clear and to the point and don't be afraid to show your passion.

**05 Prepare your materials.** It might be useful to leave your MP with a summary of the key points that you raised at your meeting, as well as a reminder of the request that you have made. Leave yourself enough time to prepare this in advance, as well as any additional materials such as case studies that your MP might find useful.

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## ▶ At the meeting:

**01 Share your story.** Personal stories are a really powerful way of engaging others and conveying your passion and commitment. If this is your first meeting with your MP, you might want to start the meeting by sharing why it is that you care about the issue that you are raising.

**02 Acknowledge your MP.** MPs rarely hear the words ‘thank you’ from their constituents. Always thank them for supportive actions that they have taken in the past or simply thank them for making the time to meet with you.

**03 Be concise.** Your meeting isn’t going to last very long so be ready to summarise the issue and your request in less than 5 minutes so that you can leave the remaining time for questions and discussion.

**04 Know both sides of the story.** There may be coherent arguments against what you are asking for. Be prepared and do your homework to counter any opposition. If you don’t know the answer or how to respond, tell your MP you will get them further information — it’s a great excuse to followup and build a relationship with their office.

**05 Avoid an argument.** Unfortunately not all MPs will be supportive of our issues. Fair, balanced, and thoughtful conversations will keep the door to your MP’s office even if you don’t find common ground at this particular meeting. Always leave with a thank you and a commitment to follow up with relevant information.

**06 Make the issues real.** Facts and statistics are abstract and impersonal. Sharing a story or case study will put a human face on the issue and get your MP emotionally involved. Look out for a powerful video, photograph or article that you could show during your meeting.

**07 Make clear requests and ask for a response.** Often, the main reason advocates have unsatisfactory meetings is that their requests were not clear and specific enough. Your MP will very likely be waiting for you to get to the point of what it is that you would like him or her to do. In addition to your specific requests, don’t be afraid to ask your MP what else they think they can do (whether they say yes or no to your original request). For more information about the kind of things that you can ask you MP to do, see our briefing MPs and their Role in International Development.

## ▶ After the meeting

**01 Congratulate yourself.** Meeting with your MP is a huge achievement and a really important step for engaging them as a long-term international development champion.

**02 Send a ‘thank you’.** Send a letter or email to your MP to thank them for the meeting. If you promised to provide them with any additional information, you could include this in your message.

**03 Follow up.** Without follow up, your effort in scheduling a meeting and speaking powerfully about our issues could be wasted. If your MP committed to do something, set a reminder to follow this up in a few weeks in case you haven’t yet had a response.