

# How to: approach your local politician

## Before the meeting

Before you engage your local decision maker, do some research. What are their interests and motivations? How have they voted on this issue in the past? Tailor your approach so that it is relevant to them. Remember these two key rules:

- **WIFM - 'what's in it for me?'**: Adjust your language to the political party you are writing to. Learn the concerns of an MP are before you write to them. Read their maiden speech so you will know exactly what their interests and passions are. A majority of the time their WIFM will be votes and/or positive media coverage. Work out what your hook is and use that in your communications with them.
- **KIS - 'keep it simple'**. Information you give to politicians and key stakeholders should be concise (ideally no more than one page if possible) and should be easily understood by a 12-year-old. You should talk about your frame, but mostly about the frame that interests the politician you are writing to or meeting with.
- Before you start any public campaign that involves a politician, give them the heads up. Write them an introductory letter to tell them about the campaign (see template) and ask them if they will support it before you say anything publicly. Personalised emails and letters are more likely to get a response. Follow up with a phone call to check it arrived.
- Once you get started on organising your street stall and on the day itself, you can start using social media and local media outlets to get your message to them. Keep it courteous and not combative!
- Consider inviting them to visit your stall if it is appropriate.
- Once you have carried out your stall, leverage the community support and media and social media to ask them for a meeting.

## At the meeting

- **Listen carefully** to what they have to say, rather than talking at them.
- Clarify at the start whether it is **on the record or off record**
- Meet with them at **their electoral office** where possible as they are more relaxed, and it shows you are making the effort.

## After the meeting

- **Follow up** and try to help politicians after you meet with them. For example, you could try to get local media to cover your meeting, send the politician a photo or send a thank you letter.
- However, in relation to media, always think strategically about when to engage the media – in many cases it may be more advantageous to do things quietly.