
Day of action on health and safety
Lobbying on health and safety
28th April 2012

How to lobby your MP on health and safety

It is important that MPs hear directly from their constituents that any the government's reduction in regulation and enforcement of health and safety, along with cuts in the budget of the HSE, or the health and safety budgets of local authorities, will have a real effect on levels of injury and illness. The number of people who are suffering from illness or injury because of their work is not just a statistic but real people whose lives are being cut short or who face a life of pain and suffering because their employer was negligent.

The best way to make sure that they understand this is if they meet with union members, including ones who are living with the consequences of an injury or illness that was caused by their work, and relatives of those who have died as a result of an injury or illness.

Lobbying is a really important way of getting the message across because you can explain, face to face, exactly what the implications of the decisions that government and parliament make are, and how they affect real people. Your local MP will almost certainly hold a local surgery weekly, fortnightly or monthly. Some will hold them in different parts of the constituency.

You can find out when your MP has their surgery by checking their web site, by telephoning their office, or it may be in your local paper. If you do not know who your MP is then go to <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/mp/>

You should write or phone first to let them know you will be there. Most MPs now run an appointments system, although this is not always necessary.

Why we are lobbying

The aim of our campaign is to persuade Government MPs that any cuts in health and safety enforcement, research, or in the provision of advice and guidance will have very real effects in the long run. Britain already has over 20,000 premature deaths caused by work and 1.9 million people whose health has been damaged by work. The message needs to get through that their constituents are deeply concerned about the impact of the Government's policies and want them to change course. It may be unrealistic to expect an MP to announce a complete change in their views after a single meeting, but the more they get the message that their constituents are concerned about the impact of the cuts in regulation and enforcement the more they are likely to think next time the issue is raised.

You should therefore use a meeting with your MP to try to make sure they

understand the impact of government action on their constituents and persuade them that many other constituents share your concerns. However also get them to do something practical, such as writing to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (who is responsible for health and safety), the Prime Minister, or the local paper to show that they share your concern.

It is important to seek action from your MP and not just sympathetic words.

Meeting with your MP

Call the constituency office and ask for an appointment. If there are several people going you can either go as a group or each make individual appointments. You should then send the MP a letter explaining why you want to see them.

Remember to do your homework. Try to find out the figures for injuries and illnesses in your area. Regional figures are available on the HSE website. Outline any local concerns, such as if there is a particular industry based in the constituency. If you are in a rural area then remember that agriculture is one of the most dangerous sectors. You should also try to find out if there have been any deaths or prosecutions reported in the area in recent years.

At the meeting

Remember that this is not a demonstration or lobby, but a genuine attempt to persuade your MP about your arguments. Attending surgeries are a powerful way of delivering a message to your MP, and can have a lot of impact, but you are there to persuade.

It is best to be as brief, clear and courteous as possible, especially as they may only have a few minutes and many other people will be trying to see their MP with problems. In particular have in mind what you actually wish your MP to do as a result of the meeting. You may find that you are not meeting the MP but their researcher or an assistant. Explain that you really do want to see the MP but treat them politely and still briefly outline the case.

You should also be specific. Don't wander off the subject so it becomes just a general moan about the Government. Show you know the facts and stick to them. Most importantly give them time to reply. You do not just want to talk at your MP you want to hear what they say and respond.

After the meeting

After you have finished the meeting you might want to write a note about what was said and then follow up the meeting with a letter thanking them for the meeting and, if they agreed to do anything, confirming what was agreed.

It may also be worth writing to the local press after the meeting. If the MP was unsympathetic and refused to do anything then there is no reason why this should not be publicised. On the other hand, if they did agree to support you then they will welcome the publicity.