

SPEAK OUT AGAINST SANCTIONS – LOBBY YOUR MP

More and more people are facing benefit sanctions.

Half a million people have had their benefits suddenly stopped by sanctions in the last 12 months.

There's a big task ahead of us to but one of the best and easiest things you can do is lobby your MP.

This guide is created to make that process as easy as possible.

What is lobbying?

Lobbying is about raising issues with and seeking to influence your elected representatives. You don't need to be an expert on the government's Benefit Sanctions policies to tell your MP you are against what is happening. Your MP will see you as a constituent and as such is meant to represent your interests even if he/she does not agree with them.



Unite's top tips

- **Don't be daunted** – be confident in putting your case across
- **Be brief and concise** – you will know more about the issues than your MP
- **Use personal stories** – this is likely to have more influence on your MP
- **Remember to include your name, address and postcode in any correspondence**
- **Follow up** – if you are not satisfied with your MP's answer, say so, and write to or visit them again. Get your colleagues and friends to write too.



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How to find your MP?

You can find out who your MP is, their surgery and contact details at the Find Your MP website:

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>

or alternatively by Googling your MP. If you don't know who your MP is, simply enter your postcode in the find your MP look up. You can also write to your MP at the House of Commons, Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA

How do I arrange a meeting/discussion?

Simply phone, email or write to your MP's constituency office to arrange a meeting.

How to lobby in your local area?

You can lobby your MP in your local area by arranging to go along to one of their surgeries or contacting their office to make a separate appointment to see them (please note that MPs are usually only around for local meetings on Monday mornings, Fridays and Saturdays or during the parliamentary recess).

A good way for you to see your MP is to attend one of their advertised 'surgeries'. It is always best to give your MP's office a call beforehand to check whether you need to make an appointment, although some MPs' surgeries are 'drop-in' sessions that operate on a first come, first served basis.

Make sure you call well in advance to make an appointment or turn up early for a 'drop-in' session to have the best chance of seeing your MP.

What is a constituency 'surgery'?

Just about every MP holds constituency surgeries – many weekly, or fortnightly and some monthly. These surgeries are an opportunity for MPs' constituents to raise personal concerns and seek their MP's help with their problems. It's an opportunity to raise an issue directly with your Member of Parliament, you could speak to them about your concerns regarding the benefit sanctions regime.

Write a letter

You may find it easier to write a letter or send an email. Remember to include your full postal address in all correspondence. Make your letter as personal as possible. Your MP will find it difficult to ignore real stories of how the government's benefit cuts will hurt you, your family or people you know.

Keep the pressure on

If you don't get a reply to your letter or email or don't feel your MP has addressed your concerns, write, call and visit again. Encourage family, friends and colleagues to get involved as well.

The more people your MP hears from the harder it is for them to ignore you. Don't be daunted, they represent you and now more than ever they need to hear what we have to say.

Meeting your MP

The most important thing for you to keep in mind is exactly what you're asking your MP to do:

1. Speak out against the cruel sanctioning regime.
2. Raise the issue at PMQs.
3. Raise the issue in Westminster during debates.

How should I prepare?

Keep it simple. No one expects you to be an expert. You are a concerned constituent who is asking their MP to commit to action.

Use Unite's website for a few key facts but just keep it personal. Your MP will want to know what the impact of government policy means to their constituents.

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