

Lobbying- FAQs

1. Can I make a difference?

Yes! You can make a difference in ways that the ZF and CFI cannot. Your MP will read a letter from you as one of his/her constituents, provided it is courteous and concise. He or she may possibly bin a similar letter sent as a circular from the ZF or CFI offices. If the MP receives two or three letters from constituents on the same subject, but phrased differently, it would count as a "heavy postbag"! The more MPs hear about an issue from their constituents, the more likely they are to take action, so make sure you specify what action you want them to take.

2. What sort of action can an MP take?

Ask your MP to write a letter to the Foreign Secretary or appropriate Government Minister and ask for a copy of their reply. The MP may not agree with your point of view but is obliged to write to the relevant minister. In this way the impact of your letter is doubled and added to letters written by others.

Other actions MPs can take include signing up to an 'Early Day Motion' showing support for a particular issue or requesting a debate in parliament. The ZF and CFI will try to monitor Early Day Motions and if you are registered as an Advocate, we will do our best to notify you of any motion which your MP has signed (or could be encouraged to sign) suggesting some points you could make in a letter.

3. Do I need to be an expert?

No! Remember MPs need to keep on top of a wide range of issues. Often you will know more about a particular issue than your MP. And your MP may well be grateful for any information you can provide. If you have relevant personal experience from a visit to Israel or from a family member – use it! If you meet your MP and he/she asks a question which you cannot answer – tell them so and commit to get back to them with the answer. You can always come to the ZF or CFI for help.

4. How can I begin?

Make sure you know the name of your MP. If you have a computer you can look up: <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/> Put in your postcode in the box provided, click the 'Find' button and this should tell you the name of your MP. It will also give you a link to his/her website, if they have one (most do). Begin to find out more about them - their special interests etc.

5. Writing a letter

Letters are important, but MPs may get 200 a day so make sure yours is noticed!

So...

- Keep it short – not more than one side of A4.
- Make it legible – be sure to write clearly if writing by hand.
- Write in your own words – this will have more influence than standard "form" letters.
- Stick to one issue per letter.
- Be polite and courteous.
- Always point out if other local people share your concern.
- Make it clear what you are asking your MP to do in response – see Section 2 above!
- Put your own address on the letter so he/she can reply.

- Address your letter to Mr/Mrs/Ms xxxx MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A OAA.
- Send a copy of any reply to the ZF and CFI:
ZF:
 ZF, PO Box 1948, 116 Ballards Lane, Finchley, London N3 2DN /
office@zionist.org.uk

CFI:

Advocacy, CFI Communications, PO Box 2687, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 7LZ.
advocacy@cfi.org.uk

6. Does it Matter which party my MP belongs to?

No. The Party in power formulates Government policy but all MPs have influence they can use in Parliament, in one of the Committees, or in Government. It's always worth saying if you belong to the MP's Party, but it does not matter if you do not. Make constructive points in your letter and not threats.

7. Seeing your MP in person

The Lobby Day is a great opportunity to make the most impact by bringing people to Parliament from as many constituencies as possible.

However, if you have been unable to secure a meeting with your MP on the Lobby Day itself, you can see your MP in their constituency instead. Most MPs hold a surgery on Friday or Saturday. Call their office to find out if you have to make an appointment. Make some notes in advance of the key points you wish to raise. Think about the counter arguments he/she is likely to make. Be sure that you will recognise him/her – try and find a photo in the local paper or on the MP's website. Be punctual but be prepared to wait...the MP is often running late! When the meeting ends, leave a brief outline of your concerns and the action you want your MP to take.

8. How can I get my letter noticed?

- a) Find something you can agree with in a local campaign the MP is running or, better still, in a recent speech the MP made in Parliament. Thank him/her for it, then continue: "On another subject..." The MP will be delighted that you have noticed what he/she said in parliament!
- b) Put your key points briefly and clearly in the letter. It is impressive to see an MP acknowledge that an activist is "well-informed".
- c) Make sure you address the letter in the MP's preferred style: most Conservative MPs prefer to be given the courtesy title Esq. Labour MPs generally do not.
 If you are writing to a Privy Councillor use the title: The Rt. Hon.

9. What not to do!

Please do not mention the Zionist Federation or Christian Friends of Israel.

You are writing as one of the MP's constituents. This will give your letter much more weight than would be the case with a letter from what he/she might regard as a lobbying organisation. Remember at all times that you are seeking to build a relationship with your MP rather than to win an argument – so please avoid a hectoring or combative tone.