

NO2ID

Lobbying your MP

1. Firstly, make sure you know who your MP is and only contact that person. It doesn't matter how well informed you are, or how annoyed about the issue, MPs have no choice but to pass on letters from non-constituents to their own MPs. Don't even think about it.
2. Be polite. Write as you would wish to be written to. If you are rude, snotty and sarcastic and ascribe the worst possible motives to the MP then you have immediately lost the argument. They are almost certainly going to discount a rude letter from an arrogant constituent, regardless of the merits of the case. Also, being rude allows the MP to justifiably come back with a rude response which fails to address your concerns. It's far far harder for them to peremptorily dismiss an extremely polite letter.
3. Don't exaggerate ("worse than Hitler"), be insulting ("you're just a Blairite lickspittle clone"), or arrogant ("I'm here to educate you") or invent conspiracies ("secret plan to allow Blair to subdue the population and become President of the EU"). Don't make threats ("if you don't do what I say I won't vote for you"). MPs, regardless of the size of their majority are not swayed by this one, and take it as a challenge. If threats from the people with the majority view worked, MPs would have banned abortion and reintroduced hanging years ago. They will often vote against the general consensus, and it's your job to persuade, not to threaten.
4. Write your own letter. Do not cut and paste as MPs are increasingly deluged by pointless email campaigns. There are large numbers of people who copy every passing email on the issue du jour, contacting the MP several times a month, just forwarding on campaign letters floating round the internet. 50 identical letters just get 50 identical replies, and the MP is left with the suspicion that you really didn't know or care about the issue you forwarded on. 10 individual letters on ID cards will carry far more weight than 100 identical ones it took you 20 seconds to copy, paste and send.
5. Be specific. Don't just have a general moan. Draw their attention to the forthcoming debate and urge them to oppose the third reading. Detail exactly why you are unhappy with a particular aspect of the Bill – the fines, the amount of data stored, the possible secondary legislation, the unworkable technology. Show you know your subject, and are not just sending in a knee-jerk dismissal. Also do not wander off the subject to take in other aspects of government policy you are unhappy with. Save it for a separate letter.
6. Keep it short. Two pages. An absolute maximum of three. No more. If it's longer than that it's a rant, and MPs and their staff are not going to wade through it. Nine

page letters are normally the preserve of the slightly stranger constituent and credibility diminishes with length.

7. If you don't get a reply after about 3 weeks, send a polite reminder. MPs in poor constituencies are overworked and overwhelmed, and tend to take longer to respond as they have huge amounts of casework. Policy issues normally go to the back of the queue, and the MP will get to you after he or she has stopped several evictions, deportations, neighbourhood harassment and various other crimes, and sorted out any number of constituents' repairs. Not fair, but understandable.
9. When contacting your MP do not abuse their staff. Caseworkers work long hours, dealing with complex problems for average pay and a good MP is very protective of them - and will remember the names of the people who upset them. A surprising amount of constituents feel that righteousness of their cause allows them to be as abusive as possible to a lowly staff member. Needless to say these brave people are usually far more polite if and when they actually meet the MP in person. In many cases, the staff will agree with you and not their MP, but you won't know that as they'll be professional. You should be too.
10. Visit a surgery or ask to lobby as a group. If you are a local group of concerned anti-ID people, write and ask for a meeting with the MP to discuss your concerns. Or visit your MP's advice surgery as a concerned individual. Don't turn up en masse and lobby the MP at an advice surgery unless you've made arrangements beforehand. Surgeries are for individuals, many of them with urgent and desperate cases. Group lobbies are not appropriate.

Don't turn up randomly in Central Lobby of the House of Commons, put in a Green Card and expect the MP to pop up. The Parliamentary estate is spread over a very wide area and your MP will be hard to track down. If there's a national lobby let your MP know in advance and try and make arrangements to meet beforehand.