



We support groups of young people in schools and colleges around the country to tackle the issues they care about, by involving them in creative, youth-led community projects

For more information:

www.youngtimebank.org.uk

helpdesk@youngtimebank.org.uk

How to Lobby your Local Councillor, MP or MEP.

Lobby (lobbied, lobbying)

verb

- To try to influence the thinking of legislators or other public officials for or against a specific cause: **lobbying for stronger environmental safeguards; lobbied against the proliferation of nuclear arms**

They all work for you

Your local councillors, MP and MEPs all work for you! It is their job to represent and respond to the concerns of their constituents (people who live in the local area).

Your local Councillors are locally elected and usually drawn from your local community. They represent you on your local town, city or borough council. Here, they can voice your views and concerns about local services and policy, including housing, local roads and transport, education, social services and libraries

Your Member of Parliament is your representative in Westminster, where new laws are made and government policy is scrutinised. They deal with bigger issues, like national Government policy on schools, hospitals and transport. It is their job to voice your concerns, as one of their constituents, in the House of Commons. Your MP can ask questions in the House of Commons for you, write to ministers (senior members of the Government) on your behalf and sponsor and vote for new legislation.

Your Members of the European Parliament represent you at the European level, scrutinising European laws, which affect all sorts of things from the environment to animal welfare and human rights to fairer trade

Top tips

Writing a personal letter is a tried and tested way of creating social change. The logical first step if you want to change something is to write to the person with the power to

- Write to **your own** MP, MEP or local Councillor!
- Ask them to give their opinion about the issue, or to do something specific.
- Ask them to reply – make sure you give your full name and address.
- If you're not happy with their answer - keep going!
- If they don't answer your questions, write to them again.
- You can also arrange to visit your MP in person – they hold regular 'surgeries' in the local area.

Making an impact

They want to make you happy! – Your MP and your local councillors especially want your vote – the least they'll do to try and get it is write back (and you don't have to tell them if you are too young to vote yet). They don't have to respond to your letter but they are shooting themselves in the foot if they don't. If they don't reply to you, write to them again, express your disappointment, and ask them for a response!

Every letter counts – not that many people write to their MP, so those that do make an impact. Most lobby groups (groups like Amnesty international or Friends of the Earth) say that a dozen personal letters on an issue is enough to rattle an MP – and they should know – it's their job to put pressure on MPs to do more for good causes.

You are the expert! MPs and other representatives have to keep up to date on a huge range of issues – chances are you will know more than them on the issue(s) that you really care about.

You don't have to be super-well-informed to make an impact – you just have to show you are a concerned constituent (so make sure you put your address on your letter, so they KNOW you are their constituent). You'll be more persuasive if you can identify a clear problem or area of need and have some sort of evidence to back up your point.

Keep it clear and concise – most MPs say they prefer letters to be no more than 1 side of A4. Turning over means turning off. Write in your own words, in simple language and short sentences!

Make it personal - say why this issue is important to you, and say if it bears directly on your constituency (e.g. your local council is considering building a new, polluting incinerator in your area - you're asking them to make it easier for local people to recycle, so they don't need to build the incinerator)

Be polite - don't use language that might insult or offend them, and don't whinge! Say you are concerned or worried about this issue and try to think about what practical things you want them to do about it e.g. bring it up at a local council meeting, or write to the relevant Government department or the Prime Minister