

Engaging with your MP

A guide for Quakers following the 2024 general election



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Introduction

Your MP can play a vital role in bringing about positive change at a local, national and international level. By engaging with them, you can help bring Quaker testimonies into the public sphere, creating a society more aligned with our values of equality, peace, truth and sustainability.

We encourage you to build a long-term relationship with your MP so that you can support them to maintain truth and integrity in public life.

Once you have built a positive working relationship with them, it will be much easier to engage with them on individual issues of concern to you and your Quaker community.

This guide sets out the principles and practicalities of engaging with your MP. It builds on our earlier resources: [Contacting your MP](#) and [Election guide 2024](#).

Reaching out as a meeting

Most Quaker meetings cover more than one constituency, so you'll need to get Friends together from each constituency to write to each MP. You can find out who your local MP is at <https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP>.

We have provided some greetings cards to help you reach out to your MP, please email politics@quaker.org.uk if you would like us to send you a copy.

Find out your MP's background, views and interests before you contact them. This will help you phrase your greetings card, email or letter in a way that will grab their attention and encourage them to respond positively.

At www.theyworkforyou.com you can find MPs' voting records and view their recent appearances in parliament to see the issues they tend to speak about. Their website and social media accounts will also give you clues about their views and interests.

Send the greetings card then follow up by email if you haven't heard back from the MP within a month.

Either in your initial approach, or if they respond positively, you could invite them to join you for Meeting for Worship and a chat over refreshments afterwards. You could also have a meal with them, as this can be a good setting to make a personal connection. The public affairs team has been doing this as part of our quiet diplomacy work – [read more](#). Christian Aid also has a useful resource called [Breaking Bread](#).

Engaging jointly with other faith groups

Joint engagement with other churches and faith groups can be a great way to build relationships with them and catch politicians' attention.

You can write a joint open letter to your MP with other churches and faith groups in your constituency. [Use our template letter](#).

To further catch your MP's attention and promote shared values, you can send a press release to your local news outlets along with a copy of the letter. [Use our template press release](#).

Reaching out as an individual

We suggest that you consider reaching out as a Quaker meeting first. This is because an MP will often be more likely to respond to an approach by a group of constituents.

If you would like to approach your MP as an individual, you could use our [template email](#).

Engaging with MPs who aren't your local MP

MPs rarely respond to individuals who aren't their constituents.

If you want to contact an MP who isn't your MP about an issue in their constituency, it's best to find someone in their constituency who can write to them. You can find out who your local MP is at <https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP>

If you want to contact them about a national issue because you know they have an interest or influence over that issue (e.g. they are a minister for it), it's best to do this via a national Quaker organisation (e.g. Quaker Truth and Integrity Group) or a national non-Quaker organisation (e.g. Friends of the Earth).

What to do if you get a meeting

How to prepare

If you haven't already done this, research your MP's background, views and interests before you meet them. As mentioned above, you can look at www.theyworkforyou.com and the MP's website and social media accounts.

If you're meeting your MP as a group, it's a good idea to get together beforehand and plan how you're going to conduct the meeting, including who will do/say what.

How to conduct the meeting

How you conduct the meeting will depend partly on whether you decide to make it a meeting for worship, a meal, or a conventional meeting. Whatever you choose, we suggest you keep the first meeting focused on listening and relationship-building. You don't need to achieve all of your goals in the first meeting, nor is this likely to happen.

Here are some key points you may wish to cover in the meeting:

Introducing Quakers and the local meeting unless the MP is already very familiar with them

Asking the MP how they are finding their role and what issues they are passionate about

Asking the MP if there is any moral or practical support you can provide them with as they go about their role

If it feels appropriate, sharing one key issue that you care about and would like them to advocate for in parliament. You can find key questions and issue briefings in our [Election guide 2024](#) and [briefings for MPs](#).

Expressing your desire to work with them on an ongoing basis

Consider letting us know how the meeting went, and if there's anything from the meeting you think we should follow up on. This can really help our own central public affairs work in Westminster. You can contact us via politics@quaker.org.uk or 020 7663 1138.

What MPs can do (and what they can't)

As you build an ongoing relationship with your MP, it will be useful to bear in mind what they can do and what they can't.

An MP can:

- Raise awareness of issues in a number of ways, including parliamentary questions and debates, committee inquiries, media work, and social media posts.
- Influence policy and legislation, for example by proposing amendments to bills as they go through parliament.
- Connect you with other key stakeholders, for example by introducing you to other MPs or organisations who care about the same things as you do.
- Find out more in our [Contacting your MP](#) guide.

An MP can't:

- Fix issues that are the responsibility of other bodies, such as local councils.
- Act on behalf of individuals who live in another MP's constituency.

MPs will often be unwilling to speak or vote against their party's position on an issue, but that shouldn't stop you from raising concerns you have.

How to follow up

Make sure to thank your MP for agreeing to a meeting, no matter what the outcome or tone of the meeting. You can also remind them of what was discussed and agreed at the meeting.

Get back in touch with them after a set time, usually about a month is good. You want to leave it long enough that they have an opportunity to reflect on the issues and take action if they agreed to, but not so long that they forget about you and your meeting!

Remember you can let us know how your engagement is going and contact us with any queries at politics@quaker.org.uk or 020 7663 1138.