



**UK FEMINISTA**



**UK FEMINISTA  
ACTION  
TOOLKIT**

## HOW TO LOBBY



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## UK FEMINISTA

UK Feminista supports people to campaign for equality between women and men. We provide campaign resources and training, facilitate links between activists, and raise public awareness about the continued need for feminism. Our vision is of a society in which women live free from sexism and enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

# WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

## WHAT IS LOBBYING

Lobbying just means influencing, or attempting to influence, people who have the power to make decisions. It targets a key individual or group on the basis of responsibilities they hold, and asks them to take a specific action. It's a narrower term than "campaigning" or "activism", which often include lobbying, but also mean protests and demonstrations, general awareness-raising about a particular issue, and fundraising.

This guide will focus on lobbying politicians, which is how the term is usually understood; it comes from the lobbies of the Houses of Parliament, where people gather to meet MPs and peers. But bear in mind that lobbying can target any authority whose decisions you have a stake in, like businesses where you are or might one day be a customer, or universities where you're a current or former student.

Professional lobbying is a big industry: there are several agencies that work on behalf of clients, particularly businesses, to monitor how Parliamentary activities might affect them, and make arguments on their behalf. But it's much broader than that: many charities also employ people specifically to seek politicians' support for the causes they promote, and trade unions and other membership organisations also get involved in relevant legislation, and represent members' interests.

But anyone with a vote is entitled to lobby political representatives- however few their resources or little their experience. This guide aims to give some insight into how lobbying can be opened up into an effective tool for grassroots feminist campaigners.

## WHY SHOULD I LOBBY

Like other forms of activism, feminist involvement in lobbying has been on the rise in recent years, with some key achievements to show for it.

### CASE STUDY 1

#### #WomensSafetyPledge

At the most recent local elections, in May 2014, feminist campaign group End Violence Against Women and its supporters asked council candidates to sign up to **four key pledges**: protecting women's services, working to ensure that schools prevent abuse, campaigning on women's safety in the local area, and developing a council strategy to bring it all together.

The campaign used a combination of old and new techniques, from letters sent to the candidates' registered addresses to connecting with them via social media. These efforts generated 800 candidate sign-ups, including whole party slates (the entire list of 50 to 70 candidates standing for the council from the same political party) in some areas. In many cases, the elected councillors are now forging ahead with these plans already.

You can find out more about the pledge and those that signed up [here](#).

### CASE STUDY 2

#### UK FEMINISTA MASS LOBBY

At the UK-wide level, a recent high-profile grassroots lobbying effort was UK Feminista's own mass lobby of Parliament, in late 2012. On 24<sup>th</sup> October, 400 feminist activists attended a rally, march and mass lobby event in Parliament. Although it was the march, led by Dr Helen Pankurst and the Olympic Suffragettes, that garnered significant- and welcome- press coverage, the lobbying session afterwards, in which

those who attended held pre-arranged meetings with their MPs, was a significant achievement in itself.

Unlike many feminist campaigns, which focus only on those MPs known to be sympathetic already, the mass lobby engaged with any MP whose constituents had joined the day, whichever their party and whatever their past record on feminism. So a large number of MPs, some of whom may never have been engaged on issues such as pregnancy discrimination, Female Genital Mutilation or abortion rights, had the opportunity to see that these issues matter to their constituents and are not minority concerns. The activists who took part will be able to take these conversations forward as key votes and debates come up on these subjects, and hold their representatives to account.



You can read more about the lobby [here](#).

## CASE STUDY 3: WOMEN'S SAFETY CHARTER CAMPAIGN, LAMBETH

A good example of a one-off lobbying campaign in a specific borough was the Women's Safety Charter campaign that kicked off in Lambeth in 2012, supported by community organising group Movement 4 Change. Although the campaign did not originally set out with lobbying politicians as its main aim, one of the most significant achievements came when it turned its attention to the local council.

The group had found that many women were experiencing the same problem with Lambeth's night-time economy, like the clubs and bars of Brixton: they were frequently harassed and put in fear of violence simply as part of a night out. In consultation with residents, community groups and women's rights charities, they drew up a charter for local clubs to sign, which included pledges such as a well-advertised zero tolerance policy on sexual assault or harassment on their premises, and door staff trained to enforce it. By involving councillors in this process, the group was able to establish that if clubs signed up to the charter, it would become part of their licensing conditions in the future. In addition, the council committed to scrutinise any new venues putting in licensing applications about whether they too were taking these steps to make women's safety a priority.

You can read more about the campaign [here](#).

## WHAT SHOULD I LOBBY FOR?

The first step in any lobbying strategy is to know *what demands you are going to make*. What is it that you want to change, prevent, or suggest? Unlike awareness-raising campaigns, which are more about promoting public discussion and scrutiny of something,

successful lobbying is focused on specific decisions you want someone in power to make. And politicians are busy people facing many competing demands on their time, who are more likely to engage if they don't have to spend time working out what it is you actually want them to do!

### Are you asking them to:

- a) Oppose or amend a specific proposal that the government or council leadership is making?
- b) Make a proposal of their own to change the existing law or policy on your issue?
- c) Be a champion for the issue you're raising, for example by asking questions to government ministers and council Cabinet members about it, and speaking on it when it comes up in debates and meetings?
- d) Two or all of the above?!

In practice, most grassroots campaigning centres on the first two of these: you might be reacting to a plan to cut a local service, or seeking to change the law on immigration. In these cases, the action part is decided for you: a), you want them to lead or support the case against the proposal you object to, or b) you want them to lead or support a new proposal.

But you may be keen simply to engage your local representative on women's equality issues, and to encourage them to speak up in support of it whenever there is a need or an opportunity to do so. This is a perfectly legitimate demand to make.

It's worth bearing in mind that lobbying of this kind can lead directly to very significant changes. The joint Fawcett and Object campaign to challenge the extraordinary growth of lapdancing clubs in the early 2000s is a good example: there was a strong consensus among activists that this uncontrolled growth was threatening women's safety and quality of life locally, and damaging equality for women overall.

But when they engaged with their local councillors, asking them to stop granting so many licences or to impose tougher conditions to protect women, the real problem emerged: councils didn't have the right kind of powers to challenge the spread of clubs in their area.

Unlike sex shops and porn cinemas, where the law already recognised that local communities should be able to raise a wide range of objections and questions if a new application was brought, lapdancing clubs were instead licensed like cafes and restaurants, with far fewer grounds available to base objections on. For this to change, new legislation was needed. The issue was taken up nationally by Fawcett and Object and, following a lobbying campaign that engaged all parties and gained the support of many national women's right charities, a new set of licensing powers regulating "sexual entertainment venues" came into effect in 2009.

So, lobbying can often lead to unexpected achievements: although grassroots campaigners are unlikely to have the time or resources to launch a UK-wide legislative campaign alone, they can play a big part in setting major changes in motion.

## WHO TO LOBBY?

Before you start throwing your efforts into writing materials or setting up meetings, you'll need to make sure you've picked not only the right demands but also the right targets. Who is it that has the power to make the decision you want? And who can influence them?

Because this guide isn't geared towards mass campaigns, which are usually run by professionals, it aims to help you be very selective in whom you approach. If you do have more time and resources than this, you may wish to expand the list to include large groups of potentially sympathetic MPs, or even all of them- or every councillor in your area, your region or even the whole country! This guide may still offer some useful

insights, but has not been written with this in mind.

Firstly, you should be clear about the distinctions between local, UK-wide and regional government, and where different decisions are made. This can be surprisingly complicated. For example, if you are planning to lobby the local council on sex education in your local schools, remember that they will only be able to intervene in the schools they run; not free schools or academies, which have separate rules, so you'd be better off lobbying your MP about these (or the schools themselves!).

In some areas, there are also other decision-making levels; most obviously, the devolved administrations: the Welsh and Northern Ireland Assemblies, and the Scottish Parliament. There is also the European Parliament, a much-neglected but important democratic institution that has played a major role in the history of gender equality. This guide does not aim to give a comprehensive account of how to lobby at all these levels, but focuses on Parliament, as the UK-wide legislature, and local authorities.

Even the split between Parliament and local government is not straightforward: for example, in London, local responsibilities are split between the 33 borough councils, and the Mayor of London. If you want to focus on street safety in London, some roads are the responsibility of the local councils, but many major routes are within the Mayor's control instead. Mayors have also been established or are now being elected in other parts of the country, and since 2012, Police and Crime Commissioners have had responsibility for local policing matters in England and Wales. The landscape of power changes quickly! Make sure you establish who's in charge before you kick off a campaign targeting the wrong institution- and if you're not sure, you are well within your rights simply to ring up the local council or your MP's office, and ask.

Secondly, once you've established at what level of government the decision is made, the next thing to work out is whom the decision-maker is, i.e. *which elected individual is in day-to-day charge of the issue you are seeking to influence*. This person is obviously your most direct target (although see step 3 below). Identifying them is pretty straightforward when it comes to ministers in the UK government and devolved administrations, who are very high-profile- it's pretty easy to work out who the Home Secretary or Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport is. But getting to know a local council can take a bit more work. You'll need to be prepared to spend a lot of time on local council websites looking up the relevant Cabinet member, especially if you're lobbying several councils at once.



Photo credit: Guy Bell

Thirdly, you should find out who your own representatives are: that is, the ones responsible for representing the area you (and other members of the group) live in. Your MP or councillors (or your Assembly Member, or Member of the Scottish Parliament etc.) are often the best first port of call for a lobbying campaign, because it is their job to engage with you as their constituent, and to represent you to the decision-maker at that level (so an MP can write to the relevant minister; a local councillor can write to the relevant Cabinet member and so on). This is where it really pays off to ensure you've figured out the right institution to lobby (step one), so that you can be realistic about how far they can help you. For example, most people would

write to their MP about a local issue, but if the decision involved is actually a local council responsibility, the most an MP can do is support your case. It's probably still worth meeting them to see if they are willing to use their influence this way, but your priority would be to lobby the council, so you should consider talking to your local councillors too.

Finally, you should think about whether to engage with the Opposition to whoever is making the decision- sometimes known as their shadow (if there is one; see below on how variable this can be in local councils). Getting them to raise an issue can help to create pressure on the decision-maker and ensure there is a debate. But since your priority as a lobbyist is to secure change as soon as possible, you should be realistic about how much to focus on this as a goal.

You can see from the above that one of the key skills in lobbying is to be clear about the difference between *who has power, and who merely has influence*: many people can help you to get your case heard and strengthen it by adding their support (this includes not only the Opposition but also relevant stakeholders like well-known businesses and charities, and the media), but there is usually only one decision-maker. Once you are clear on who this is, it's for you to decide how much time you want to spend talking to the former.

## PICKING YOUR TARGET: A CHECKLIST

- Make sure you know whether the issue you want to lobby on is a local or UK-wide decision.
- Find out who has the power to make that decision.
- Find out who your elected representative is at the relevant level- they are often the best first port of call.
- Consider the role of the Opposition.

The sections below give a more detailed guide to some of the people you might want to lobby, and how to influence them.

## HOW DO I LOBBY PARLIAMENT?

### YOUR LOCAL MP

#### What do they do?

An MP's job is to represent the interests of their constituency in Parliamentary decisions, by voting on government legislation, sometimes proposing legislation of their own, or speaking in debates or discussion. To do this properly, they need to stay in touch with constituents and their concerns- and that's where you come in.

The Parliament website- in many ways the lobbyist's primary tool- gives a very clear overview of what actually goes on in Parliament, which you can see here: <http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/role>  
If you don't know who your MP is, you can search for them on the Parliament website by using your postcode: <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk>

#### What should I be asking them to do?

On UK-wide issues, your own MP will in most cases be your first port of call; if you are campaigning in a group with members from more than one constituency, it's worth approaching all the MPs, especially if they are from different parties. On local council decisions, they may still agree to intervene by expressing their concern about an issue, especially if you have shown that it has a particular effect on their constituency, but they have no formal role, so you will need to lobby the council directly

## HOW DO I INFLUENCE THEM?

It's impossible to overstate the importance to lobbyists of *getting to know your MP*, and to

see them as an individual, before attempting to engage with them.

Like the general public, campaigners are often understandably frustrated by various aspects of politics, and are of course inclined to have strong political views of their own. But you're fundamentally unlikely to be a successful lobbyist if you aren't willing to work with a range of different politicians, understanding their point of view even if you disagree with it (even if you are a staunch opponent of their entire political outlook!) and to understand what motivates and constrains them to some extent.

You can never do too much research, but the checklist below should give you a reasonable insight into what you can expect from them.

### **Which party are they in, and how loyal are they to it?**

This one's obviously essential, especially where you are lobbying to change the stated policy of the current government.

If they are in the party or parties of government, then they may be able to have real influence with the relevant decision-maker. However, you should be clear that most MPs very rarely vote *against their own party*. This is not simply because they are craven or keen to be promoted; it is also because governments and political parties, like all organisations, can only function with some degree of discipline and finality in decision-making. However, if you can persuade them that a decision is genuinely the wrong one- for example by pointing out a disproportionate impact on women that they may not be aware of- then they may still be persuaded to take up your cause. If they are a minister in the same government, be clear that they are especially unlikely to do this in a public way, or to vote against it when push comes to shove. However, they may still be prepared to raise concerns behind the scenes- a good MP will always put good decision-making before blind loyalty.

If your MP is not in the party (or parties) of government, they are a) more likely to want to support a criticism of that policy, especially in public, but b) less likely to be able to make a difference, since by definition the government will already have a majority of the MPs in Parliament, and therefore of the votes. However they *can* speak up and put pressure on the government. This is still an important way for issues to be picked up (by ministers themselves, by other MPs, by the public and even the media), and so persuading your MP to speak up for your cause is almost always worthwhile. It might also pay off substantially in the long term, if they decide to try and make the issue a priority in their own party; it may even end up in their manifesto for the next election (for an example, check out the Labour Party's pledge to repeal the "bedroom tax" based on the impact on their constituents). However, you should check the party doesn't already have a set position on the issue you're lobbying on, as the same challenges would then apply in trying to get them to disagree with the party line. This will be especially true if they are a shadow minister.. However, it's worth saying that all parties have their rebels: those MPs who either have no ambition to be a minister in future, or who hope that gaining a reputation for independence will not necessarily hold them back. Websites like <http://www.theyworkforyou.com> are a useful way to check an MP's record (both the topics they speak on in debates, and how they actually vote) and take a guess at how likely they are to be loyal to the party. They may even sit on one of the select committees, which are elected by other backbench MPs to scrutinise the work of a specific government department, in which case it's their job to be critical even if they are in the same party as the government.

So, if you do have the time and resources to contact several MPs, then select committee members and helpful rebels should definitely be top of your list.

## **Do they already have a personal view on this or a related subject- have they voted on it in the past?**

This could save you a lot of time! MPs obviously have their own opinions, whether or not there is a party line. As well as They Work For You, check their own website (all MPs have one) and search for any online media articles where they may have commented on your issue. If you find they've taken some anti-feminist positions in the past, like opposing abortion rights, for example, that doesn't mean they won't be sympathetic now (even MPs are allowed to change their minds), but again, it allows you to be realistic.

## **Can I make this a constituency issue?**

Can you make a specific link between your campaign and their constituency? Have there been some recent local media stories involving Violence against Women and Girls that you can use to show them that this is not just an abstract problem, but a real threat to their own constituents? Is there something about the local population- such as the ethnic mix, or a high proportion of younger or older people- that can help you show the need for a service that's facing closure? Again, online research is worth your while.

## **Do I know their political interests?**

This can be determinative if you're confident in your knowledge. Not all MPs in a party have the same views as each other (there is a left wing of the Conservative Party, and a right wing of Labour, for example), and if you can get a more detailed insight into your MP's specific political brand and the subjects they're passionate about, you may be able to forge a stronger connection with them. Again, online research is key- They Work For You even allows you to set up an email alert every time a particular MP speaks.

Be careful, it's also a riskier strategy if you get it wrong! Don't try a line about how the Human Rights Act supports your position on the Tory old guard, or tell a Labour leftie

how much you admired Tony Blair's record on child poverty- if you don't know, best to keep it simple.

## **What are their interests outside politics?**

These are allowed! What's more, they can make a big difference to how someone votes: for example, many issues (including abortion, for example) are seen as matters of conscience, and MPs may be strongly influenced in their approach to them by any religious convictions they may have. Similarly, they are likely to have ongoing interests in whatever they were involved in before politics- were they in business, law, a trade unionist, a charity worker, and if so, can you find a way to make that relevant to your issue? Do they have a family- are they, perhaps, a working parent who should therefore understand the need for better childcare provision? And, in the age of social media, it's easier than ever to find out whether they simply have hobbies that might help you. If you want to lobby on greater recognition for women in sport, it's good to know that they're in an amateur football team.

## **How do I make contact with them?**

You should approach them in writing (email is best), explaining that you or another member of the group are a constituent, setting out what the issue is and asking for a meeting. Alternatively, you may want to invite them to an event you are already having about the issue, or, if you are lobbying on behalf of a local service, ask them to visit- as long as you'll still have the chance to discuss the actual issue. If you are their constituent, you'll need to be clear that you are not bringing them casework, e.g. you are not seeking help with a personal issue like a housing problem. If they suggest you come to their regular constituency surgery, explain first that you want them to raise an issue in Parliament, and that ideally you'd prefer a separate, specific meeting about it.

You can contact them by:

- Checking the Parliament website for their email address. You can use a website like Write To Them (<https://www.writetothem.com>) but sending a stand-alone email shows you've done your research.
- Ringing the Parliamentary switchboard on 0207 219 3000 and asking for their office, who will give you the address
- Tracking them down on Twitter- they probably have a link to their contact page in their bio. If they don't, tweet to ask them!
- There's even a convention by which you can go into Parliament and fill out a "Green Card" for your MP in the central lobby, saying that you are their constituent and giving your address. The Parliamentary officials then go in search of them, and if they are on the premises, they should then come down and meet you. However, in reality, they may be at an external meeting or in their constituency, and of course, although it's your right, this is quite a pushy way to make contact, which may not create the best impression. It's much better to arrange a meeting in advance.

## THE RELEVANT MINISTER OR THE PARTY LEADERSHIP

### What do they do?

Although the Prime Minister leads the government, she cannot run every department or have every idea by herself. Prime Ministers therefore assemble a Cabinet made up of other MPs in their party, all with specific decision-making responsibilities.

The government website has a guide to all this here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/how-government-works>

If you don't know who the relevant minister is for your specific issue, you can check the Cabinet page at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers>

### What should I be asking them to do?

Asking the Cabinet minister responsible for a specific area of policy, or even the party leadership (i.e. the Prime Minister or the leader of an opposition party), to change direction on a specific plan, or even to do something completely new, is your right as a voter. As a lobbyist however, it's a long shot, and not necessarily the best use of your time- you'll have to use your judgment about whether the issue is high-profile enough.



### How do I influence them?

In fact, as part of their democratic obligations, governments do usually launch public consultations on specific proposals: there are run by the responsible government department (the Home Office, the Department of Education etc), and anyone can respond to these. The UK government have recently made changes to the way they run consultations; the new set of principles governing these can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>

However, a government may still decide to press ahead with a plan despite any objections raised during a consultation, (if there is no legal reason why they shouldn't). If you want to change their mind, or if you want to get them to do something they

haven't consulted upon at all, you will need a different approach.

Ministers don't have the same obligation to meet you as your MP does; it obviously wouldn't be practical for them to meet every voter who might have an opinion about their decisions. You can write to them, but the most likely outcome is that you'll get a polite letter back from their office, politely rejecting or even ignoring your demands.

Lobbying of this kind is most likely to be effective if it's done in a more *public* way. One obvious vehicle is a petition addressed to them with many signatures; a good example is the recent successful campaign by Bristol student Fahma Mohamed, asking for then Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove to write to all schools about their responsibilities in tackling Female Genital Mutilation.

Petitions are easier than ever before thanks to the internet, and especially social media. You may want to set up an e-petition on the official government website, [www.epetitions.direct.gov.uk](http://www.epetitions.direct.gov.uk), or on one of the dedicated websites that give people a platform to do this, like Avaaz or 38 Degrees. Old-fashioned hard copy petitions are still an option, but it's harder to get as many signatures as quickly. Writing a petition is obviously a much less individually tailored activity than planning to lobby a specific MP. Indeed, many petitions arguably target their message more at the people signing it than at the minister it's addressed to, which may well generate publicity for an issue but is less likely to change the decision-maker's mind if you alienate or even insult them

A better way is to seek a balance: aim to show both that the issue is important to women, and that it fits with the stated priorities of this particular government. Try to point to examples where the minister or their party leader has spoken of women's equality as important, or where they've taken positive steps on it in the past.

Make sure you publicise your petition and encourage those who sign to pass it on; you

might also want to send it to any journalists who might take an interest. You can check out our media guide here:

<http://ukfeminista.org.uk/take-action/toolkit/media/>

And, don't forget to make sure you do actually bring it to attention of the decision-maker you're lobbying- a link to the main petition can be emailed to them even while the petition is still open.

## **How do I make contact with them?**

You can contact them via their department, which is easily found online; it's best to send it to their Parliamentary office too, as above. And, again, Twitter is a great way both to make contact and to raise the petition's profile.

## **HOW DO I LOBBY LOCAL POLITICIANS?**

### **What do they do?**

Local government is classically portrayed as being about nothing more than potholes, parking and whether your bins are collected weekly or fortnightly. In fact, local authorities have significant powers, and may gain more as the public debate around localism intensifies.

As in the Lambeth Women's Safety Charter, and also ongoing efforts by groups like Object to take action against lapdancing clubs, councils can make a significant difference to their local community through their licensing function. They also have significant roles in health, planning and housing, including refuge provision for women escaping violence. They are often also a key source of funding for local services run by the voluntary sector, including Rape Crisis centres, Citizens' Advice Bureaux and SureStart Centres.

But lobbying local government can be much more complex than lobbying Parliament. Not only does it work completely differently as a decision-making system, but also there's more than one level of council. So, for

example, you will need to know whether, in your area, you have just one unitary authority running your local services, or whether you have both a county and a district council. The government website has a tool for this: <https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>

Once you know which council or councils you want to lobby, you'll want to find out who the responsible Cabinet member is for the issue and, if you live there, who your councillors are. This is a matter of checking each council website individually. If you don't know which ward you are in, most council websites have a tool to help you find it.

### **Which councillors should I engage with?**

As with Parliament, your approach to a local council as a lobbyist might involve both asking your own local representatives for their support, directly lobbying the decision-maker, and also working with the Opposition.

But, for various reasons, your local councillor might not always be as useful a contact as your MP is for Parliamentary decisions. For a start, local councillors are not paid a salary, though they do receive an allowance for the time they spend on council business. This means that most are not able to be full-time councillors, because they also need to work. Although they are still elected to represent you, they may have considerably less time to spend on issues that are not casework..

Perhaps the major challenge with lobbying councils, however, is that their political makeup can vary much more than Parliament ever does- there are many Green and UKIP councillors in the country, for example, as well as brand new parties and independents. The most straightforward situation is one in which at least one of your local councillors (the ones who represent your ward) belongs to the party that has control of the council. In this case, you should lobby your councillor(s) as well as the relevant Cabinet member for your issue,

because they are part of the same grouping and can discuss it with each other.

Equally, if at least one of your local councillors belongs to an opposition party that has several other councillors in it, you should lobby both them and the decision-maker, because they are still part of a grouping that can exert real pressure on the governing party.

You might even have a council where there's no overall control (NOC), meaning that either the largest party governs without a majority, or there's a coalition between two parties or more. In this case, again, if at least one of your councillors belongs to a governing party or a major opposition party, then they are likely to be influential, because their vote is needed before the council can pass any motions, and you should talk to them.

If, however, your local councillors belong to a very small minority party, or are independents, they are likely to be very isolated. In some areas, for example, an entire council may be overwhelmingly dominated by one party, with just a handful of seats that don't belong to them. In these cases, it's unlikely to be worth spending time lobbying them. If you are not sure, do some research in the local media to find out how effective they are in raising issues and securing change before you decide.

### **How else can I influence them?**

To ensure that councils have a functional democratic process even where there isn't much of an Opposition, they have scrutiny committees. These are made up of non-Cabinet members from across the council, who look into a particular area of policy, like education, licensing, and community safety, and hold the relevant Cabinet member to account. You should find out which committee has responsibility for scrutinising your relevant Cabinet member, and contact the chair.

### **How do I make contact with them?**

Again, council websites, Twitter and websites like 'Write To Them' are the best places to go.

## TOP 5 QUICK-FIRE LOBBYING TIPS

It's important not to think of lobbying as a science, but as an *exercise in developing relationships*. Importantly, large parts of what happens in politics are not only beyond your control- but also beyond the control even of most politicians, except those at the very top. Alternatively, you may pick an issue that really captures a target's imagination and leads to long-term support from them, with no prior warning that they had any interest in it at all. It is not necessarily an easy area to predict- not even the professionals get what they ask for all the time. Even so, the tips below are worth bearing in mind.

### TIP 1: PLAN WHAT TO SAY IN ADVANCE

Having said that lobbying is about relationships, that doesn't mean you should treat it as just a friendly chat- even if they do. You are likely to have limited time before their next meeting, and you may end up feeling rushed and flustered, and forgetting your key points. Take some bullet-points on a notepad or your phone (if you must) at the very least.

### TIP 2: WORK OUT THE COUNTER ARGUMENTS

What would someone who completely opposed your demands say in order to dismiss them? It's incredibly useful to anticipate these and have your answer ready. For example, if a local councillor is worried that tighter lap-dancing club licensing will drive away business and says it's surely an issue of personal choice, prepare some quotes from women residents about sexual harassment outside the clubs to read to them.

### TIP 3: IF YOUR CAMPAIGN HAS MEDIA SUPPORT, SHOW THEM!

Politicians always want to know if an issue may garner them, and their party, some favourable headlines. This isn't as cynical as it sounds: they can't achieve things if they get voted out, and publicity can obviously help them gain support. If there have been protests or demonstrations about your issue, or if an influential newspaper or journalist has come out in support of it, make sure they're aware of it. The local press is especially important, so make sure you know what's in it. And if it hasn't yet had any media coverage, and you want to address that, UK Feminista has produced guides to using both traditional and social media.

Check them out here:

<http://ukfeminista.org.uk/take-action/toolkit>

### TIP 4: ...BUT DON'T OVERDO IT

When I worked in the office of the Mayor of London, a man wrote to say he had secured "both local and national media interest" in the unmended pothole outside his house. Whether or not this was true, instead of terrifying somebody into action, as he obviously intended, he was told, again, that he needed to complain to his local council (pick the right target!), and he'd lost sympathy and credibility in the process. Don't overestimate the power of the media in persuading elected politicians to do what you want (and don't make it up!)

### TIP 5: EVALUATE AND CELEBRATE!

Eventually, your lobbying campaign will come to an end, or at least take a break. Professional lobbyists have an obvious interest in evaluating their results, and learning from them next time- but so do campaigners. It makes the movement stronger when lessons are shared widely, so think about writing about your campaign afterwards- including what worked well and

what you would do differently next time- perhaps as a blog for the UK Feminista website. Crucially, think of “success” in the broadest possible way: it may come unexpectedly long after you thought you’d failed- such as an MP deciding to raise money locally for a women’s service even if they couldn’t stop a funding cut from the government.

Another example of delayed success is a good one to finish on. Emily Wilding Davison famously lost her life for the cause of women’s suffrage in 1913, a full 15 years before women won the right to vote on equal terms with men.

In 1991, Tony Benn MP placed a [plaque to her memory](#) in the broom cupboard in the House of Commons crypt, where Davison had hidden on the night of the 1911 census, so that her address could be legitimately recorded as "the House of Commons". So even though it came a whole century later, she now has a permanent presence there, and a monument to her determination and her courage. She and her fellow suffragettes most certainly won the argument in the end.



We at UK Feminista wish you the very best of luck with your own lobbying, and hope this guide is helpful. We also hope you won't ever have to sleep in a broom cupboard to make your point.