

# Engaging with your local MP for Starts at Home campaign

The logo for 'starts at home' is located in the top right corner. It consists of the words 'starts at home' in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with 'starts at' on the top line and 'home' on the bottom line. The text is white and is set against a dark teal circular background that has a white border.

## The Starts at Home campaign

We launched the Starts at Home campaign last year to highlight positive contribution supported housing makes to our economy and society. Starts at Home brings together leading housing and disability charities to ensure supported housing is fully funded and sustainable for the long-term.

We are inviting MPs and councillors to visit their local supported housing scheme. We would be happy to arrange a visit for you over the summer recess which would include a tour of the scheme and a chance to meet constituents whose lives have been transformed by these homes and services.

For more information about our Starts at Home campaign, please visit [www.startsathome.org.uk](http://www.startsathome.org.uk)

## A step by step guide to contacting your MP.

### Step 1: Identify your MP

Each MP represents a constituency and is bound to serve the people living within the area. The simplest way to locate your MP is by visiting the official Parliament UK website, where you can type in your organisation's postcode into the ['Find your MP' search bar](#).

You may find that your organisation spans a number of constituencies. MPs can legitimately make representations on behalf of their constituents who use services outside of their constituency. Consider engaging with these MPs too.

### Step 2: Get in touch

MPs receive hundreds of letters and emails every day. Each MP will have a small staff dedicated to sifting through all correspondence. For first contact, it is therefore advisable to write a letter to your MP, signed by your chief executive or chair, and printed on letterhead paper. Letters should be addressed to the MP's constituency office which you can find when your search for your MP on [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

In the letter you should set out the following:

- 1) That you would like a meeting or to arrange a visit with them
- 2) Who your organisation are
- 3) Why supported housing is important
- 4) A commitment to follow up with their office to liaise about logistics

If you require any guidance, please email Barry Hartness, Public Affairs Officer at the National Housing Federation on [barry.hartness@housing.org.uk](mailto:barry.hartness@housing.org.uk).

### Step 3: Arrange a meeting or visit

When offering or arranging a visit, it is worth bearing in mind that MPs have huge demands on their diary. Unless Parliament is in recess ([take a look a recess dates](#)), MPs will spend Monday afternoon through to Thursday afternoon every week in Westminster. It is therefore advisable that you try and offer a Friday or Saturday to visit a scheme.

#### **Step 4: Getting the most out of your meeting or visit**

MPs have a limited amount of time per meeting or visit so it's important that you make the most out of your time with them. If you are able to arrange a visit to a scheme, try and ensure that the MP not only sees the site but also meets service users. Personal accounts from these service users are a powerful tool and can showcase the very best of the vital work which you do.

Ahead of your meeting try and send your MP a briefing about the schemes you run and the importance of supported housing so they are informed before attending and can ask you any questions they may have.

When discussing the importance of supported housing, it is vital that you talk about supported housing provision as a whole. While the MP will be very interested in the scheme which is in their constituency, it is imperative that they understand that this is a national issue with national consequences.

MPs are keen to be seen as championing their constituencies in Parliament. During the visit, ask your MP whether they would be willing to write to the Minister of State for Welfare Reform, Lord Freud, on your behalf asking him to commit to a sustainable and long-term funding model for supported housing. Some MPs may also wish to table Parliamentary Questions or table a debate on the issue. The National Housing Federation is happy to supply additional guidance in your follow up with their office if this is the case.

#### **Step 5: Getting the most out of your meeting or visit**

After your meeting make sure you write to your MP thanking them for their time and support.

If any actions were agreed on the visit such as: they agreed to write to the Minister or table Parliamentary Questions, remind them of this and suggest future contact with them to ensure they are kept up to date on the issue

#### **Step 6: Let us know about how your visit goes**

The National Housing Federation is keen to hear back about how your visits and meetings go. Please do [give us your feedback](#).

#### **Need more help?**

If you have any questions or would like further information, please [email Barry Hartness](#).