



Quick guide to lobbying an MP

Many AIFA members have requested guidance of how best to influence MPs. AIFA believes that members play a vital role in our lobbying, and delivering a consistent positive message to MPs will benefit our profession. This quick guide illustrates how this can be achieved.

MPs can influence the future of our profession, and direct and personal contact with your MP can have a massive impact. MPs will be impressed that you are passionate enough about the issue to meet them or write to them, which means it's a very effective way of campaigning.

Although your MP may not agree with you, they are obliged to write a letter to the relevant government department if you ask them to. If they do agree they may ask parliamentary questions about the issue. If you don't know who your MP is or their contact details click on the following link: <http://www.writetothem.com/>

Meeting with your MP

The best way to get your message across to a politician is to meet them face-to-face. Every MP holds a regular 'surgery' in their constituency, often on a weekly basis – you can usually arrange a meeting by calling up their local office and asking for an appointment. It is often best to write to your MP first, briefly stating the points you will raise and who will be coming. Other key things to remember are:

- Do start off by **thanking the MP** for making the appointment
- Do **plan what you are going to say** - you're unlikely to have more than 15 minutes to get your point over, so it's vital that you are **clear, concise and straightforward**
- Do **be polite and listen to what your MP has to say** (even if you disagree with them).
- Do **make notes** of your meeting - so you can follow up any important points
- Do **leave behind a piece of prepared information** summarising your main points
- Don't worry if you don't have the answer to all their questions - write it down and say that you'll get an answer to them
- Don't forget to **ask your MP to provide feedback** at the end of the meeting. Find out what they're going to do and when they plan to get back to you with more information.

Following Up Your Meeting

- After meeting your MP you have a great opportunity to build a relationship with you MP. **Regular contact is an important factor** in lobbying.
- **Write to your MP** and say thank you for meeting you, remind them of what you talked about and what they promised to do.
- **Invite them to an event** that you are organising locally or try to **arrange a further meeting** when you might have more time to talk about this issues and discuss responses from departments.

AIFA often finds it useful to provide key pieces of literature to MPs. Examples of useful documents include AIFA's:

- Manifesto for Advice,
- Financial advice: worth the money, and
- Restoring consumer trust; building on that which works.

All these documents can be downloaded from AIFA's website [<HERE>](#)

Writing to your MP

Writing a letter to your MP is also a great way to get your message across. For every constituent who makes the effort to write a letter, MPs often assume there are many more constituents who are concerned about that issue, but don't bother writing. It is often said that each letter an MP receives represents 80 voters who didn't find the time to write and is considered to be worth 20 emails – because sending emails is so much easier than writing.

All MPs are different and have different ways of organising their time and their work. However it is crucial to keep in mind some general tips when drafting your letter to an MP:

- MPs are very busy. Keep it **short and to the point - one side of A4** is plenty
- **Use your own words** and show the MP that you are a real person –standard letters are less impressive
- If you write your letter by hand, make sure it is **legible!** If you print your letter, remember to sign it personally.
- Start by saying that you are a constituent, a member of AIFA, and explain briefly what areas you advise on
- **Be polite and positive** – it's easier for an MP to dismiss the rude and negative
- Ensure that when you highlight a problem, you also **offer the MP a solution** – your letter must be **constructive**
- Make sure your key messages are **clear and concise - use bullet points** to highlight your arguments and include **supporting facts** to back up your case

- **Ask the MP to do something** – such as writing to the responsible Government Minister, asking a parliamentary question or tabling an Early Day Motion. By convention all letters referred to a Minister receive a reply which will be sent to you.
- **Thank the MP** for helping you before signing off.
- Remember to **include your full name and address**. You need to make it clear that you are a constituent, and the MP needs to be able to send a reply.
- **Send a copy of the letter and any reply to AIFA** to keep us informed.

Key tip for letters on the RDR

As advisers, it is very easy for us to get caught in the detail of the RDR. Many MPs will not have the depth of knowledge that advisers have. Instead, it is crucial that you pick out a few key messages – problems and then solutions – which relate to an MP.

So, for example, the RDR changes could result in advisers leaving the profession, reducing the access to advice for consumers. If the transition was more pragmatic then advisers would not be forced to leave, resulting in more advice for consumers.

Alternatively, the issue of qualifications could be raised. The imposition of a QCF Level 4 qualification could be considered retrospective. If a work based assessment was available, then advisers would not be forced to take examinations, and more people would be able to continue to receive advice.

Or highlighting the differences between a bank and an IFA. IFAs do not typically hold client money, are not systemically important, so why are they being asked to hold significantly more capital? In an environment where capital is scarce for all businesses this will clearly be an issue of which MPs are acutely aware.