



**Constituency Lobby**  
**26–27 June 2009**

**Constituency organiser's pack**



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# Join the lobby – make your voice heard



Thank you for deciding to take part in the Constituency Lobby. This pack will give you all the information you need to prepare for the lobby, and to persuade your MP that it's time to Get Fair.

## About the Get Fair campaign

Over the past two decades Britain has become richer – but not any fairer. The UK is now the fifth richest country on the planet – yet the gap between rich and poor continues to grow. Government statistics reveal 12.8 million people in Britain today are living in poverty – that's 1 in 5 of us. Get Fair supporters want a fair society, free from poverty in all its forms.

You can add your voice and mobilise others to call on decision-makers to **make Britain fairer**.

## About the Constituency Lobby

On 26 and 27 June this year, across the UK, the **Get Fair Constituency Lobby** will descend on decision-makers in their home constituencies. This will be our key time to influence election manifestos and present specific policy asks on income that meets minimum living standards, affordable housing and fair access to services. You have already taken a key step by signing up, as it is only **together** that we can create the political climate for our decision-makers to act for the poorest in our society.

We are calling for all major political parties to deliver on their existing commitment to end child poverty by 2020, and extend this goal to tackle poverty across all generations in the UK. Specifically, we are calling for politicians to commit to concrete measures to ensure:

- **An income that meets minimum living standards**
- **Affordable housing and decent neighbourhoods**
- **Fair access to services, without discrimination**

Get Fair is targeting more than 50 key constituencies around the country, where MPs and Prospective Parliamentary Candidates have the power to influence party policy and propose legislation. Wherever you live, we are asking you to visit your own local Member of Parliament and ask them to do all they can to support these measures. By taking part in the lobby, you will be joining thousands of other people throughout the UK, sending a loud message to our political parties that it's time to Get Fair.

## What is in the pack?

This pack breaks down the local lobby into a series of manageable stages to help you get organised and organise others in your constituency.

- **Get started** – deciding how you are going to organise your lobby locally
- **Get ready** – doing your homework on your MP
- **Getting your case together** – preparing the policy asks
- **Get set** – preparing for the meeting itself
- **Get back** – following up with the media, your MP and us!
- **Templates and pro forma letters**
- **Planning checklist**



# On your marks!

## Register as a constituency organiser



*Before you start planning your engagement with your local MP, you need to let us know you are acting as an organiser in your local constituency.*

*This way, we can make sure we are covering as many constituencies as possible during the lobby, and we can put people in the same constituency in contact with each other. Please let us know the best method of contacting you, and whether you are happy for us to display this on the Get Fair website to allow others to get in touch with you.*

*Please fill in the form below or sign up at [www.getfair.org.uk/lobby](http://www.getfair.org.uk/lobby)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Group (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Constituency and/or name of your MP (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate how you plan to organise the lobby locally (if known)

- Option A: Arrange to visit your MP
- Option B: Invite your MP to meet you
- Option C: Hold a public meeting

Are you planning to organise your lobby on 26/27 June  Yes  No. If no, what other date are you planning (if known)

- Please tick if you do NOT want your contact details to be made publically available (e.g. on the [www.getfair.org.uk](http://www.getfair.org.uk) website).

**Please return the form to Get Fair, c/o Church Action on Poverty, Central Buildings, Oldham Street, Manchester M1 1JQ, or [info@getfair.org.uk](mailto:info@getfair.org.uk)**



# 1. Get started



## **Organise your lobby: what's your appetite?**

The scale of your local lobby can be as much as you can chew – from a spicy little letter to your MP, all the way to a public meeting with a banquet of guests from the local community!

Remember that whatever way you choose to join in the lobby, every letter and meeting will add to the impact we have together. The most important thing is to plan well and take into account the resources available to you – have ambitious dreams but set realistic goals to achieve them. Below is a suggested 'menu' of options for different levels of engagement with your local representative, but feel free to come up with other creative recipes to lobby - and do share them with us!

Depending on the size and scale of your event, you will need to consider who you will need to help you with the planning. Once a group of people committed to organising the lobby has been established, one of the most difficult hurdles has already been overcome.

## **Peckish? Option A: Arrange to visit your MP**

If your capacity is small but you want to make a real impact, you can write a letter to your MP and request a visit during their surgery hours. This is really important and the more people you can inspire to do the same the better! You could even pass a letter round your church or campaigning group to get more signatures, build a delegation of people from your constituency to visit your MP together, and encourage people you know in neighbouring constituencies to do the same!

If you are taking a delegation to a surgery you will need to consider carefully how many people you are taking from your constituency and what role they will have in the meeting. It would be good to have a maximum of 5 or 6 in one meeting, if possible representing a spread of campaigners, people affected by poverty issues and people with no direct experience of it.

You can build your delegation by recruiting representatives from relevant sectors in the local community to present the reality of how poverty affects people. Use your own networks of friends, churches and neighbours and contact local groups of organisations signed up to Get Fair nationally, but make sure you build a delegation that represents your constituency.

By joining in the constituency lobby you are representing and advocating the voices of people who do not often get the chance to speak. So it is important that within your lobby group you begin by listening sensitively to each other – especially if there are people within the group with relevant or sensitive experiences, or quieter people who may need encouragement to share ideas.

And don't forget we can help you get in contact with others lobbying in your area if you let us know what you are doing! You will need to be happy for us to put your email address or number on the Get Fair website.

## **Hungry? Option B: Invite your MP to meet you**

If you have more than 6 people in your delegation, you could invite your MP to meet with you and ask them to sign up to the campaign asks. MPs are most likely to be in the constituency on Friday and Saturday – so a Friday evening or Saturday morning breakfast meeting might work best. This will require contacting your MP as soon as possible, as they quickly get booked up! The meeting could bring together a coalition of people from other organisations, agencies or groups, or it may bring together a group of people for the very first time.

Depending on the logistics involved you may need to form a planning group to help you organise the event, and delegate roles for planning the content and facilitation of the meeting, specific invitations, and publicity and media coverage.

You could invite MPs, church leaders, councillors, business people, trade union reps, academics, civil servants, and other local government departments. Sometimes offering to make a personal visit to an MP or councillor's surgery by 1 or 2 members of the planning group may help to persuade that particular person to attend. It may also be worth visiting others you regard as key participants.

### **Ravenous? Option C: Hold a public meeting**

If you have a large number of people interested and time to plan well, you could even invite your MP to a public meeting or project where they can be asked questions and respond to real stories from people impacted by poverty in the UK. The impact could be very widespread and gain significant media coverage.

You will definitely need a planning group to organise the event. You will need to delegate specific roles to individuals who can organise the content of the meeting, the logistics of the event, invitations, publicity and media coverage. As a group you will need to decide how often you will meet, where and action points to follow up in between meetings.

You will need to generate good publicity through as many of the following channels as possible:

- local radio, television and newspapers;
- newsletters of voluntary organisations and community networks;
- churches, church-based groups and organisations;
- local politicians and businesses;
- friends, neighbours and word-of-mouth.

You should make sure that posters and flyers are displayed in local arts venues, public buildings, churches and other groups, at least 4 to 6 weeks beforehand. You can't have too much publicity – you should circulate information as widely as possible.

It is worth thinking about how people who are unfamiliar with reading English will be able to find out about the event, and feel that they would be welcome.

As well as distributing general publicity, you should target specific groups and individuals who you want to attend the event. As a rule it is best to send general invitations along with a covering letter no later than 6 weeks before the event is due to take place.

Flyers should be accompanied by a short covering letter. It is worth considering how many people you hope will attend. A good premise is that if you want 100 people present, then you need to canvas around 1,000 individuals and organisations. It is often easier to do this through the networks of other local or regional organisations, some of which will be only too happy to enclose information about your event in their monthly or quarterly mailings. Others may let you have names and addresses of their contacts so that you can go directly to them.

It is important to identify possible allies or those groups and organisations that can offer practical assistance. Also consider whether there are any local publications, newsletters or email groups which might help you to publicise the event. Local branches of organisations which are members of Get Fair would be a good place to start, but there may be others too,

Keep a record of all the individuals, groups and organisations to whom you have sent an invitation. This will help you in the event of having to follow up your invitation.

## 2. Get ready (doing your homework)

Bear in mind that whatever the scale of your local action, the lobby is not the end of the process, but the beginning of dialogue with your MP on your concerns about poverty in the UK. You can establish a relationship with them, and other campaigners in your area, to keep poverty high on the social, political and economic agenda both locally and nationally.

### Researching your MP

It is helpful to become familiar with you MP and their office before you descend on them at a surgery! Find out what they do, what committees they are on, what their specialist areas are. It is useful to find out about any particular responsibilities they hold and whether they are interested in UK poverty. The more local information you can provide about poverty, the problems and potential solutions, the better. But remember – they may know a lot more about issues in your local area than you give them credit for!

You can find out more about your local MP and get in contact with them at:

- [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)
- [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)

Your MP may have their own website, or you could do an internet search for them.

### Contacting your MP

Once you have found out about your MP, try to get in contact with their office and find out the best way to approach them. Be polite and clear on the phone about what you are aiming to do, the office will get a lot of calls so they need to know you know what you want! Here are some pointers for the best way to approach your MP:

#### Nine nifty tips

- **Don't be aggressive or assume ignorance** – they may be on your side, and will probably have researched the issue before your arrival!
- **Book in advance** – make an appointment by phone, email or letter, letting them know exactly how many people will be coming, what you want to talk about and how long you need.
- **Make sure you are their constituent!** MPs' surgeries are for people who live in their area.
- **Give them a chance to research what you want to talk about** by sending them a clear letter or email in advance of your meeting.
- **Don't abuse the function of the surgery** – they are for local constituents and ideally no more than 6 people at a time.
- You may be able to ask for a special 30-minute slot, or squeeze in at the end of their surgery.
- If you have more people you would like to involve, or need longer than 30 minutes, you should think about **inviting your MP to an event** instead.
- Make sure to **follow up from the meeting** promptly with anything you have agreed to do – strike while the iron is hot and encourage your MP to do the same!
- Try to **create a photo opportunity** and ask if you can use it in a press release – your MP may put it on their website, and it may even feature on a parliamentary report.

## **Recruiting for your delegation**

You can build your delegation by recruiting other constituents from your own networks of friends, activists, churches and neighbours, as well as contacting local branches of organisations and groups signed up to Get Fair nationally. You can find these listed at <http://www.getfair.org.uk/supporting-organisations>.

There may be other people in your area who are already interested in joining the constituency lobby. For this reason, we are creating a page on the Get Fair website listing constituency organisers and how to contact them. If you are happy for us to put your contact details on this page, or you are happy for the office to pass them on to anyone who rings up from your area, you may gather more people to your meeting! Once you have made contact with them, you should organise a planning meeting for your lobby delegation so you can make sure everyone is briefed on the campaign aims and objectives, and you can finalise what you are planning to say in the meeting.

If you are an organiser who has been unable to find anyone to help you, we may be able to help you by suggesting people in your area to get in touch with, and letting you know if anyone else is lobbying from your constituency. Get in contact by emailing [info@getfair.org.uk](mailto:info@getfair.org.uk) or call 0161 236 9321.

## **Involving the press**

Getting as wide media coverage as possible will ensure the campaign is heard much more widely, and help raise awareness of the need to address poverty in the UK.

Making sure that the media are kept informed about the lobby has several positive outcomes:

- People to see local constituents engaging with their local MP, and getting them to engage with poverty issues!
- The Get Fair campaign and representation of the poorest, excluded and disadvantaged people are heard more widely in society!
- People with direct experience of poverty and homelessness will be encouraged to know that there are many who care about their situation.
- You will raise the profile of what your MP has committed to, and can lead to greater support.

Ultimately, good media coverage can increase the impact that we have, reaching far beyond the churches and the 'usual suspects'.

## **Local media want local stories**

Local papers, radio and TV stations are always on the lookout for local stories. If you make things easy for them, they are more likely to be interested and you'll get better coverage. Here are some hints:

- Send out a press release before the meeting, giving plenty of notice. Get the names and addresses of local papers and radio stations from your library (don't forget the free papers). Ring nearer the time to remind them. If you can identify particular journalists or departments that might be interested.
- Arrange a photo opportunity – you should ideally agree this with your MP in advance, and be clear what the photo is that you want. The image should tell your story – it would be good to have a large copy of the Get Fair logo, or statement which you can over.
- Structure what you do so that it is worthy of a headline and a picture - an interesting photo with your MP, and a statement of what they have committed to will help.

## **Press releases**

Press releases are a short, sharp way of informing journalists of your news, usually in advance! They should contain a snappy description of what you are doing and why, some quotations and local contact details. For speed and convenience, we will send all constituency organisers an outline press release with more detail on the Get Fair media angle before the start of June.

All you have to do is adapt it for your situation, then distribute it to your local papers and radio station and send us a copy too, so we know what is going on. Follow up your press release with a phone call.

You should send a press release to your local or regional news media about a week before the lobby, and follow up with another one immediately after (ideally the same day). What you include will obviously depend on the scale of action you choose, but some important details to include are:

- Who: is part of the delegation and who you are lobbying
- What: The aim of the lobby, including the Get Fair campaign objectives and any local angle, statistic or case study to give the story a local angle
- Where and when: The meeting is taking place
- A quote from a member of the delegation
- A contact phone number (preferably mobile – not an answer phone) and date of release

## **Photos**

Pictures are invaluable. Even if the paper sends a photographer, make sure you take plenty as well. Professionals shoot lots to make sure they get a few good ones. Appoint a photographer for the meeting with your MP. Use a high resolution digital camera – or get the films processed fast! Send in the best photos to your local paper, with details (who, what, why, when, contact number, etc). And please send copies to us as well, to include in national coverage of Get Fair. PS: If anyone has a good digital camera (more than 3 million pixels) or you can scan your prints, email them as JPEGs to [info@getfair.org.uk](mailto:info@getfair.org.uk). And don't forget to include the details with any photos you email!

## **Keeping us informed**

It really helps to get an accurate picture of the scale and effectiveness of the lobby at a national level, as well as sharing ideas, inspiration and success, by hearing updates from everyone who is taking local action as part of Get Fair. Please let us know what you are organising, and ask for any support you might need, by emailing [info@getfair.org.uk](mailto:info@getfair.org.uk) or calling 0161 236 9321.



# 3. Get your case together



## What are we asking for?

There is no single issue that will bring an end to poverty in the UK. However, there is strength in our collective voice, taking a stand 'together against poverty'. With the economy in recession and rapidly rising unemployment, we are calling on MPs to press the Government to act and ensure their policy responses meet two key demands:

- **Protect the poorest in our society, who did not get a fair share during the more prosperous years and who are badly hit by the impact of the recession**

*The rise in unemployment and heightened tensions at the loss of 'British jobs' may lead to increased intimidation or isolation of some vulnerable workers in lower paid jobs. We need action to ensure no one is discriminated against, marginalised or excluded from society due to unemployment or poverty.*

- **Correct the weaknesses in the economy that mean even during the previous boom years, 1 in 5 in the UK population still lived in poverty**

*During the boom period from 1992 to 2008, over 90% of the additional wealth created in the economy went to the top 5% by income of the population. The incomes of the bottom 50% of society did not increase. Those living in poverty were hit hardest. Government defines poverty as 60% of the median average household income, which does not provide an acceptable standard of living in the UK (research: Joseph Rowntree Foundation).*

At the same time, the rise in unemployment and heightened tensions at the loss of 'British jobs' may lead to increased intimidation, or isolation of some vulnerable workers in lower paid jobs. We need action to ensure no one is discriminated against, marginalised or excluded from society due to unemployment or poverty. Get Fair campaigns for a just and fair society, free from poverty in all its forms.

## What can you do?

Join with others to meet your Member of Parliament locally to support Get Fair and raise those issues that concern you most. These might include local issues, such as:

- Large scale job losses and the impact on neighbourhoods and town centres
- Increases in the cost of living, including fuel and energy bills
- The lack of affordable housing and rising numbers of home repossessions
- Threats to local public services, reducing the quality and access to services in many areas

By getting together locally, you can put forward your own concerns and, at the same time, show your support for others. There are national and community groups campaigning on those issues, including those supported by the Get Fair coalition.

- We continue to press the government to increase levels of funding and invest £3bn to halve child poverty by 2010. Without the money 700,000 children will remain in poverty.
- Millions of pensioners do not claim the benefits to which they are entitled. Up to £5 billion remains unclaimed every year. Automatic payment of Pension Credit and Council Tax benefit for older people would take over 500,000 pensioners out of poverty.
- People seeking asylum are prevented from working and live in poverty, only getting the equivalent of 70% from income support. Those seeking asylum should be able to work after 6 months while they remain in the UK, so they can contribute to the economy.

- Around 3 million people are denied access to basic financial services, including in remote rural areas. Setting up a Post Bank would provide services from 11,500 post office branches, almost twice the number of the major high street banks combined.
- 30% of disabled adults live in poverty. Changes in welfare reform could make that worse. Disability related extra costs benefits go some way to meeting the extra costs of disability. It is important keep them as extra-income benefits.

Ask your Member of Parliament what they will do to take action now and protect the poorest in our society who are hit hardest by the recession.

## **WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR?**

Get Fair is calling on politicians to commit to concrete measures that will help bring about an end to poverty in all its forms. The major reduction of poverty must be a shared objective of all the UK political parties and included in their manifestos. As well as the local issues and national campaigns you want to raise as part of this lobby, supported by the Get Fair coalition, there are three policy areas we are asking for MPs' support.

### **1. AN INCOME THAT MEETS MINIMUM LIVING STANDARDS**

In the fifth largest economy in the world all people should have sufficient money to live on. No-one should live in poverty in the UK. The current level of job seekers allowance in the UK is £60.50 per week. This is not enough money to keep people who lose their jobs out of poverty. Many vulnerable groups including asylum seekers have to survive on much less. We need to increase out of work benefit levels to ensure that those losing their jobs are not plunged into poverty, and provide more support for vulnerable groups including a right of for asylum seekers to work after 6 months. Yet Government plans to reform benefits to make more conditional on people actively seeking work will result in severe financial hardship for many families who fail to meet the requirements of the system. Get Fair is calling on politicians to:

- **Put reform of welfare benefits on hold and introduce an emergency increase in out-of-work benefits and tax credits**

### **2. AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND DECENT NEIGHBOURHOODS**

The impact of this recession has been to make even more acute the UK housing crisis. There are 1.77 million households registered with local authorities seeking to rent social housing in the UK and only 158 thousand social housing vacancies filled last year. If no one else joined the waiting list, the average wait for a tenancy would be twelve years. Repossession rates are rising as people lose their jobs and are unable to pay their mortgages, increasing the need for affordable rented accommodation in the UK. The impact of the credit crunch is making this picture worse. Building companies and housing associations are finding it far harder to access the credit they need to enable them to produce the homes that we need in the UK. House building has almost stopped. Get Fair is calling on politicians to:

- **Invest an additional £6.35 billion over the next two years to build 100,000 new social rented homes, protecting the jobs of 150,000 construction workers**

### **3. FAIR ACCESS TO SERVICES, WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION**

All public services should aim to narrow gaps in outcomes between the richest and poorest. Fair access to quality public services is key to ending poverty, in education, job support, health and social care. In addition, local amenities such as access to shops selling good food, reputable financial services and access to leisure activities are important if we are to enable people to live healthy lives within flourishing communities. No one should have to travel long distances or difficult and expensive journeys to the nearest NHS dentist or doctor, or pay more for essential services because they are on a low income. There should be no 'desert areas' or excluded groups. We need investment in new local services such as Post Bank, for post offices to provide banking services. Get Fair is calling on politicians to:

- **Protect local services in the recession, with additional funding to ensure quality public services reach out to those most in need**

Ask your Member of Parliament to pledge their support and undertake to use, or support the use of, all the powers available to government to meet poverty targets and include concrete measures in their party manifestos to achieve a lasting reduction in poverty in the UK.

## **Case studies**

It may help your case, in particular anything you send to the media, to find and use case studies and stories of real people that have been impacted by UK poverty. These could be people living below the poverty line, people struggling to find affordable housing, people struggling to access the public services they need, pensioners, asylum-seekers, job-seekers and people affected by homelessness.

These may be local people you know, or case studies by various partner organisations in the Get Fair coalition. You can find these listed on the Get Fair website at [www.getfair.org.uk/supporting-organisations](http://www.getfair.org.uk/supporting-organisations). You must have the willing permission of anyone whose story you use, and if necessary, change names and make pictures anonymous.

It may help to illustrate the issues with true-life stories or grabbing statistics about poverty. However, be careful to keep your MP focused not on answering the individual cases, but the wider picture of the need for changes in policy!

## **Raising local issues**

By getting together locally, you can put forward your own concerns and, at the same time, show your support for others. You may also want to raise local issues which are of particular concern to you – and which should also be of concern to your Member of Parliament. These might include, for example:

- Large scale job losses and the impact on neighbourhoods and town centres
- The lack of affordable housing and rising numbers of home repossessions
- Threats to local public services, reducing the quality and access to services in many areas



## 4. Get set (preparing for the meeting itself)



### Preparing the asks

Make sure you familiarise yourself with the main asks of the campaign (see section 3), and practise explaining them to other people. You may find the role-plays later on in this section helpful to get in shape when thinking about facing your MP!

### Don't let your MP off the hook

If your MP is not able to meet you on the weekend of the 26-27 June, don't let it drop – make a date when they will meet, or check when their next public surgery is when constituents are entitled to go along and raise personal or constituency concerns (those surgery dates are usually advertised locally or can be found by ringing the MP's office listed in the local directory or with the local council).

The MP can table a statement in Parliament, called an Early Day Motion, to raise awareness of your local concerns – which often then attracts local media interest. MPs can also ask questions of Ministers, in writing or in the House of Commons debating chamber – to find out facts and figures, or to make a political point that the Minister has to answer. They may write to Ministers or their own party representatives – make sure they send you a copy of that letter and any reply. Be ready to issue a local press release when you get a reply to a letter, question or statements raised by the MP. If they support your concerns, ask the MP to send out their own press release too.

Questions and statements made by MPs should be topical, if they are to attract local media interest. We will be issuing additional advice nearer the time, with a draft statement (called an Early Day Motion) for all MPs to sign in June – make sure you ask your MP to sign it! We want them to give a clear pledge to use, or support the use of, all the powers available to government to meet poverty targets. We want them to make sure concrete measures are included in their party manifestos to achieve a lasting reduction in poverty in the UK.

Meanwhile, if there is a particular issue or concern arising from the national and international talks that are taking place by the end of June, we may wish MPs to write to the Prime Minister and party leaders directly. We will let you know in June.

### Allocating roles for the meeting

It is good to go into the meeting prepared with what to say, but also who will say it. There should be one main spokesperson for each lobby group, but you may have particular stories from other members of the group that you want them to share. Make sure whatever you do you have planned who will facilitate overall communication for the group, and agree beforehand that others will not jump in unless completely necessary. It would be good to have a note-taker who can make sure they have recorded anything the MP or the group commits to in the meeting. It would also be good for someone to co-ordinate any photo opportunities, and think about how to make it look interesting and appealing to the media!

Here are some suggested roles for the group:

Facilitator

Note-taker

Storyteller / Case study

Photographer

## **Role-play**

You may find it helpful to ‘rehearse’ your lobby meeting by role-playing through how things might go.

One of you should take the role of one of the MPs described below, while one or more other members of the group make your case as you plan to on the day. At least one person should act as an observer, not taking part but noting how the conversation goes. The ‘MP’ should be prepared to raise as many relevant objections and counter-arguments as possible to the policies being suggested.

Spend 10–15 minutes acting out the role-play, depending on how the conversation goes. Afterwards, share your reflections. The observer(s) in particular may have comments and suggestions for how you could make a stronger case, or deal with particular obstacles which were raised by the ‘MP’.

Then re-run the role play using the comments and reflections to inform your approach.

### **MP A**

#### **Objective: not to commit to anything**

You are a very warm, friendly and supportive MP, delighted that members of your constituency have come to visit you, and you are very sympathetic with their cause. However, you already have your time taken up with dealing with individual cases in your constituency, and you don’t really want to commit to doing anything more.

### **MP B**

#### **Objective: win the argument**

You are thoroughly sceptical about campaigns like this, and want to know exactly how the policies would work in practice, and where the money is going to come from to implement them. As the government have already spent billions propping up the banks, how can they afford to tackle poverty issues in the current climate? You do all you can to discredit the case they are putting across.

### **Your MP**

**Objective:** \_\_\_\_\_

If you have already met your MP and have an idea of their attitude, or after you have done your research, you could also run the role play with someone playing your MP. You could prepare for this role by looking at what you know of your real MP’s voting record and party policies. (See the section earlier on ‘Planning the Lobby’.)

## 5. Get back (following up afterwards)

To ensure your local lobby has as powerful and long-lasting an impact as possible, it is essential to follow up the meeting well. It is also good to share the success of what you have achieved with others to encourage them we can make a difference! Here are a few things you should do...

### **Let the media know**

Getting media coverage after the meeting will ensure your MP is seen publicly to commit to addressing UK poverty issues, and encourage them to follow through with their actions! It is courtesy to let your MP know in advance of sending out the press release. Even if your MP has not been supportive, it is still worth letting the media know, and spreading the campaign message wider.

Before the meeting, make sure you have written a follow-up press release that you can send out immediately after the event to your local press and radio stations. This should include:

- Who was at the meeting
- Why the meeting took place
- The main asks of the campaign
- What you agreed to
- What the MP agreed to
- A photo if possible of the group and the MP
- Date and contact details

We will send sample press releases with all you need to know about Get Fair's media angle to everyone who registers as a constituency organiser – so make sure you have filled out the form at the start.

### **Follow up with your MP**

The week after the meeting it is good practice to send your MP a follow-up letter to thank them for meeting you, and confirm in writing what they have agreed to. There is a template letter later in this pack. You should also ask them if you can have a follow-up meeting in 3 months to see how they have got on with addressing the issues you raised in the meeting, or invite them to further events you will be holding in your area.

### **Let us know how you've got on**

Please let us know if you have managed to organise a meeting so we can have a complete overview of which constituencies have been targeted and how MPs have responded. It also really helps both participants and organisers to share the successes of a campaign action as widely as possible – as well as giving your story the opportunity to be made famous through websites and national newsletters!

As soon as possible after the event please send us your **photos, stories, press releases and response letters** to: Get Fair, c/o CAP, Central Buildings, Oldham St, Manchester, M1 1JQ, or email [info@getfair.org.uk](mailto:info@getfair.org.uk)

We have also included a feedback form later in this pack, which you should fill in and send to us the week following the lobby, so we can get a clear overview of how the campaign has gone and gather ideas for future action.



## 6. Templates and pro-forma letters



This section contains templates you can use for various activities related to the lobby:

- Suggested letter for contacting your MP
- Suggested letter for following up with your MP after the Lobby
- Feedback form, to let us know how it went

Feel free to use these templates and adapt them to your own needs as required.

We will also be sending **sample press releases** to all local organisers to send to the local press and media both before and after the lobby, so make sure you have filled in the registration form at the start of this pack.



## Contacting your MP

*You can adapt this pro forma letter to contact your MP and ask them for a meeting:*

[Your MP]  
[Constituency office]  
[Your region]

[Your Address Here]

[Date]

Dear [name of MP]

We are a group of your constituents from [name of local group] and we would like to request a meeting on Friday 26 or Saturday 27 June 2009, as part of the Get Fair campaign for a commitment to the eradication of poverty across all age-groups in the UK.

With the economy in recession and rapidly rising unemployment, we are calling on the government to act and ensure their policy responses meet two key demands:

- **Protect the poorest in our society**, who did not get a fair share during the more prosperous years, and who are already been badly hit by the impact of the recession.
- Use this opportunity to **address the structural weaknesses** which mean that even during the previous boom years, 1 in 5 in the UK population still lived in poverty.

At the same time the rise in unemployment and heightened tensions at the loss of 'British jobs' may lead to increased intimidation or isolation of some vulnerable workers in lower paid jobs. We need action to ensure no one is discriminated against, marginalised or excluded from society due to unemployment or poverty. Get Fair campaigns for a just and fair society, free from poverty in all its forms.

We realise that your time is limited, but we would be very grateful if you could make space for a brief meeting with [half a dozen] of your constituents from our delegation.

We look forward to hearing your response.

Yours sincerely

[Your name]



## Follow up letter

*You can send this letter immediately after your meeting with your MP to thank them, remind them of what they agreed to, and send them an advance of anything you want to send to the press:*

[Your MP]  
[Constituency office]  
[Your region]

[Your Address Here]

[Date]

Dear [name of MP]

Thank you for meeting with us on [date] as part of the Get Fair campaign.

Thank you for agreeing to...

We have enclosed a press release and photograph, which we hope you will be happy to endorse.

Thank you for your support, we hope you will continue to do all you can to ensure your party policy aims to **protect the poorest in our society**, who did not get a fair share during the more prosperous years, and who are already been badly hit by the impact of the recession, and **address the structural weaknesses** which mean that even during the previous boom years, 1 in 5 in the UK population still lived in poverty.

We would like to meet you again in a few months time to continue this discussion; can we make an appointment for one of your surgeries in the Autumn?

Yours sincerely

[Your name]



**GET FAIR Constituency Lobby 26-27 June 2009**  
**FEEDBACK FORM**

We hope you enjoyed participating in the Get Fair Constituency Lobby. Please take a moment to complete this feedback form – it should take **no more than 5 minutes**. Your feedback will inform the independent monitoring and evaluation of the campaign. Please return this form to the event organiser.

[Constituency organisers: please return the feedback forms to Cambridge Policy Consultants Newton Hall, Newton, Cambridge, CB22 7ZE. Any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Joke Delvaux on 01223 871551 or via [joke@campolco.co.uk](mailto:joke@campolco.co.uk)].

How did you first hear about Get Fair's constituency lobby? (Tick only one)

- Friends or family
- The Internet – *Please specify which site:*
- An email from the Get Fair campaign
- An email from another organisation – *Please specify:*
- I don't remember
- Other – *Please specify:*

Why did you decide to participate in the lobby? (Tick all that apply)

- To show my support for the UK poverty agenda
- To show my support for the Get Fair campaign
- I was interested in a direct dialogue with my MP
- I was interested in meeting up with like-minded people
- No particular reason
- Other – *Please specify:*

Had you already been involved in other Get Fair activities (for example Poverty and Homelessness Action Week)? (Tick only one)

- Yes – *Please specify which one(s):*
- No
- I don't remember/I don't know

Had you already been involved in other campaigns around UK poverty (for example End Child Poverty)? (Tick only one)

- Yes – *Please specify which one(s):*
- No
- I don't remember

Had you already been involved in campaigns around other issues (for example climate change or Africa)? (Tick only one)

- Yes – *Please specify which one(s):*
- No

I don't remember

Has participating in the Get Fair constituency lobby changed how you feel about UK poverty?  
(Tick all that apply)

- I feel that I now know more about UK poverty
- I feel that I now know more about local organisations and activities in this field
- I now feel more strongly about UK poverty
- I am now more likely to sign a petition on UK poverty
- I am now more likely to write or email a politician about UK poverty
- I will now pay closer attention to what politicians are saying about UK poverty
- I signed up (or will sign up) for the Get Fair campaign as a result of the Lobby
- I became a member (or will become a member) of another organisation
- I am now more likely to financially support a charity working on UK poverty
- I am now more likely to volunteer for a charity working on UK poverty
- I was already committed to fighting UK poverty and feel confirmed in my views
- The event has had no impact on me.
- Other – *Please specify:*

How likely are you to participate in future campaigns on UK poverty? (Tick only one)

- Very likely
- Quite likely
- Rather unlikely
- Very unlikely
- I don't know

Would you like to make any further comments about the lobby?

Cambridge Policy Consultants may like to contact you for a telephone interview or for the email survey at the end of the Get Fair campaign. Your contact details will not be shared with anyone else and will not be used for any other purpose than for the evaluation of the Get Fair campaign.

- I prefer to remain anonymous
- I am happy to be contacted

My name:

My number:

My email:



## 7. Planning checklist

This is a guide to help you plan your local constituency lobby on 26–27 June 2009. There are a number of stages to go through to make sure you prepare for an effective meeting with your MP.

Note also that the deadlines for the early planning will depend very much on the scale of action you take.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Register as a constituency organiser	<b>Now!</b>	
Determine your capacity and decide on the scale of your lobby	<b>As soon as possible</b>	
Contact other groups in your area who may be interested in joining your delegation	<b>As soon as possible</b>	
Send contact information for the website so others in your constituency can be put in touch	<b>As soon as possible</b>	
Get the date in your diaries and book the day of work if you need to	<b>As soon as possible</b>	
If necessary, form a planning group	<b>End of April</b>	
If you have invited your MP to an event or meeting, make a publicity and media plan	<b>End of April</b>	
Invite people to share stories and experiences of how they have been impacted by poverty issues	<b>End of May</b>	
Research your MP to find out their areas of interest and gauge their level of support	<b>End of May</b>	
Send round emails and flyers to mobilise others from your own and nearby constituencies	<b>Start of June</b>	
Send your MP a letter detailing when you would like to meet them and how many people will be coming with you	<b>Start of June</b>	
Plan the logistics of the lobby, who will say what in the meeting	<b>Mid-June</b>	
Contact the media by press release and phone	<b>One week before the event</b>	
Lobby!	<b>26–27 June</b>	
Follow-up press release	<b>Same day as the event</b>	
Send follow-up letter to MP	<b>One week after the event</b>	
Send feedback, photos and stories to Get Fair	<b>One week after the event</b>	