



Local campaigning toolkit

INFLUENCING LOCAL DECISION MAKERS IN ENGLAND

Different campaigns will have different targets, or decision makers.

When you begin to plan your campaign, you'll need to decide which decision makers you need to target. This will vary across campaigns as different organisations, people, or groups all have different levels of responsibility and influence in your area. It's a good idea to find out more about the decision makers you want to target before you think about the tactics you might use to influence them.

Here we've explained more about the different decision makers in your area, and some top tips for arranging and attending meetings. This list isn't exhaustive, you may think of other people or organisations in your area that could influence the issue you're campaigning on.

Top tip

You can find out who your MP is, and their contact details, at www.writetothem.com

1. Your MP

MPs are elected to represent the interests of constituents like you in Parliament and it's great to have their support for your campaign. They can also be useful in contacting and influencing other local decision makers, or getting publicity for your campaign.

In your local area your MP can:

- Attend a meeting or launch event to show support for a campaign (you'll need to ask them quite far in advance).
- Express concern on your behalf to local organisations, such as your local council.
- Visit a local service, like an MS Therapy Centre, or MS Society group event to learn more about living with MS.

Your MP can also be influential in the UK Parliament. They can raise your issue with decision makers there, or can help with a national issue. If you think they can help with an MS Society campaign, [contact **contactcampaigns@mssociety.org.uk**](mailto:contactcampaigns@mssociety.org.uk) to let us know.

2. Your local council

Your local council, also known as your local authority, is responsible for providing important services to people affected by MS, including social care. They also have some responsibility for transport, and looking after the local environment you live in.

Some of the reasons you might get in touch with your local council are:

- To influence a decision that is about to be made, for example, on social care funding.
- To make the case for new services to be offered.
- To challenge a decision that has already been made, such as the closure of a day centre.

It is important if you disagree with their proposals that you tell them your views.

Your local councillor is elected to represent your ward, and represent your views to others in your council. Councillors also have responsibility for local budget allocation.

As well as writing to, calling or emailing councillors, you could arrange to meet them in person during a surgery. You could also attend a public council meeting when your issue is being discussed. You can find out more and how to do this by visiting your local council's website.

Top tip

You can find out who your councillor is, and their contact details, at www.writetothem.com

3. Local health bodies in England

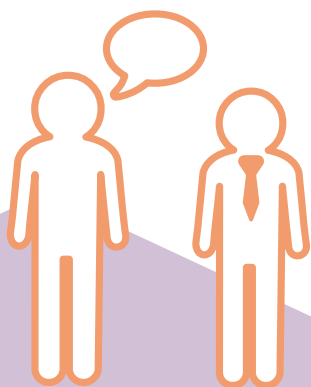
Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)

CCGs commission the majority of health services in their local area. This includes hospital and rehabilitative care, urgent and emergency care, as well as most community health services. They also have a say in commissioning GP services.

CCGs are membership organisations. Its members include GPs and other clinicians, such as nurses and consultants as well as local members of the public.

CCGs are not directly elected, but have a duty to involve their patients, carers, and the public in decisions about the services they fund. You can contact your local CCG to find out more about how they are doing this, and ask to get involved. Find their contact details on the NHS Choices website.

CCGs do not currently commission 'specialised' services, which include disease modifying therapies (DMTs). These are commissioned by NHS England, so your CCG won't be able to change access to DMTs on its own.





Health and Wellbeing Boards

Local Health and Wellbeing Boards are run by your local authority, and aim to support collaborative working between health and social care services. They carry out assessments, called Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs), which look at the needs of their local population. They then use this information to produce a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, recommending how to provide joined up services in your area.



Your Health and Wellbeing Board consults local people on both their JSNA and their strategy. You can find out more about your Health and Wellbeing Board on your local council's website, including how to get involved.



Local Healthwatch

Local Healthwatch organisations give patients and members of the public the opportunity to influence how local health and care decisions are made in their local area. You can contact your local Healthwatch if you think a service isn't being provided in the way it should, or if you think the needs of people with MS should be considered in more detail. Find out more on their website www.healthwatch.co.uk

Before approaching a decision maker

- Check if they're the ultimate decision maker on this issue, or if they will need to influence someone else. This will help to make sure you speak to the right people. If you're not sure – ask!
- Think about what you want them to do. Do you want to ask them to agree to your campaign aims straight away, or would you like to invite them to meet with you or attend an event to find out more about your concerns?
- Think about any barriers there might be – why might a local decision maker not wish to support your campaign? How might you change their mind?
- Speak to the MS Society campaigns team if you aren't sure who to approach or how to approach them.

Approaching decision makers

- You can approach them via phone, email or letter.
- Remember your key messages. Stick to your one issue and explain the outcome you'd like to see.
- Include personal stories or evidence to back up your campaign aim if possible.
- Include your full contact details so they're able to reply.

Meeting decision makers

- Explain your issue and the outcome you'd like to see. Keep discussions focused on your issue and how they can help.
- If people disagree with your position, remember it isn't personal – try to understand why and present your case for change clearly and confidently.
- Your decision maker won't expect you to be an expert, but they will want to know why you think this is an important issue for local people.
- Take any evidence you may have, and bring a copy for the decision maker to keep.
- Follow up with a letter or email thanking them for their time. Use this as an opportunity to remind them of any actions you, or they, agreed to take.