



Local campaigning toolkit

INFLUENCING LOCAL DECISION MAKERS IN WALES

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 want to target. This will vary across campaigns as different organisations, people, or groups all have different levels of responsibility in your area. It's a good idea to find out more about your decision makers 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 bodies or organisations in your area that may be responsible for the issue you're campaigning on.

Top tip

You can find out who your AMs are and their contact details at www.assembly.wales

1. Your Assembly Members

The National Assembly for Wales is made up of 60 Assembly Members (AMs). AMs are elected to represent the interests of constituents like you.

You are represented by five Assembly Members: one for your constituency and four for your region.

AMs raise questions, call for debates at the Senedd and intervene at a local level when there are problems with local services.

Your AMs 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 Health Board and local council.
- Visit a local service or MS Society group event to learn more about living with MS.

You can find out who your AMs are and their contact details at www.assembly.wales

The National Assembly for Wales has powers over areas such as health, social care, education, local government, housing and transport; on these types of topics you should contact your AM. Issues such as welfare, energy, and employment are reserved to the UK Parliament; on these topics it's best to contact your MP.

Top tip

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

2. Your Member of Parliament (MP)

MPs are elected to represent the interests of constituents like you in the UK Parliament and can be useful in influencing or getting publicity for your campaign if it is a UK wide issue or is outside the devolved power of the National Assembly for Wales.

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 authority.
- Visit a local service or MS Society group event to learn more about living with MS.

Your MP can also be influential in the UK Parliament. If you think your MP can help with an issue, contact walescampaigns@mssociety.org.uk or call **029 2167 8924** to let us know.

3. Local authorities in Wales

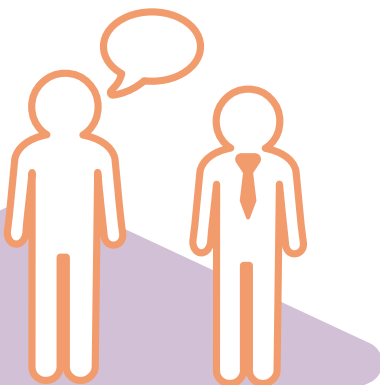
Your local council is responsible for providing services such as leisure centres, local parks and looking after the local environment you live in. They are also responsible for community planning.

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

- Influencing a decision that is about to be made, for example, on accessibility of a council facility.
- Fighting for new services to be offered.
- Challenging a decision that has already been made.

Your local councillor, elected to represent your ward, has a duty to represent your views and make the relevant staff member at the council aware of your concerns. Speaking to your councillor can be an effective way to put pressure on the local council.

As well as writing to councillors, calling or emailing, you could arrange to meet them in person or attend a council meeting. You can find out more by visiting your local council's website. You can find out about your local councillors at www.writetothem.com or by visiting your local council's website. All council websites can be found at www.wlga.gov.uk/authorities





4. Local Health Boards

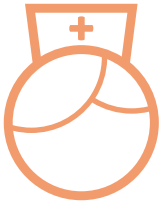
The seven local health boards (LHBs) in Wales are responsible for delivering health services and improving the health of the population.

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



- Influencing a decision that is about to be made, for example, on health services that are being delivered in your area.
- Fighting for new services or treatments to be offered.
- Providing feedback and suggestions on how services can be improved.
- Challenging a decision that has already been made, such as the closure of a day centre.

All local health boards provide opportunities for the public to become involved through a range of platforms such as Public Partnership Forums, community health councils and consultations.



MS Society Cymru organise Service User Forums in North Wales, South West Wales and South East Wales, which involve people living with and affected by MS in championing health issues directly with their local decision makers.

To find your LHB in Wales www.wales.nhs.uk/ourservices/directory

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.
- 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?
- Think about any barriers there might be – why might a local decision-maker not wish to support your campaign? How might you change their minds?
- 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.
- 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.
- Follow up afterwards with a letter or email thanking them for their time. You should also confirm any actions that were agreed.

If you have any questions about influencing local decision makers in Wales, contact our campaigns team on walescampaigns@mssociety.org.uk or 029 2167 8924.