



Meetings and service visits with MPs

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If you have any queries, please contact RCSLT's Public Affairs Adviser, Peter Just, on

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PREPARING TO MEET YOUR MP

1. *Pre-meeting preparation*

- **Let your managers and communications team know about the meeting. Run your plans by them. Seek their advice if you feel unsure about anything.**
- Think about - and plan - what you want to say to/show your MP.
- It may be that they have some experience of speech and language therapy either personally or through family and friends.
- However, it may be that they do not have very much knowledge at all about speech and language therapy and how it transforms lives. **So keep things simple and high-level.**
- If they are knowledgeable about speech and language therapy, you can tailor the conversation accordingly.

- If you wish, prepare a short handout (no more than two sides of A4) for them to take away highlighting key facts and figures about your service. This could also provide a useful structure for your conversation.
- Think about what questions your MP might ask you and think about how you might reply.
- Two common questions MPs ask are:
 - are there any challenges to local speech and language therapy services and, if so, how are these impacting on people who receive speech and language therapy?
 - is there anything that I can do to help you and your clients?
- **Think about how you would respond to these. Run your answers past your managers and communications team.**
- **Remember: be positive**
Your discussion should focus on the great work you do and the opportunities for improving patient outcomes and efficiency, not on the doom and gloom of challenges to services. What do you think might be the solution? You don't have to have all the answers. Be ready to turn the conversation into a positive demonstration of how your service is responding to any challenges and transforming people's lives.
- **Remember: MPs are important local decision-influencers**
MPs can write to commissioners and providers asking about the provision of speech and language therapy services for people with communication and swallowing needs.

SPEAKER POINTS FOR MP MEETINGS

2. Meeting your MP: introductions and overview of meeting

- Thank your MP for visiting your service. Explain who you are.
- Find out how long they have for the meeting.
- Explain that the aim of the meeting is to brief them on how your service is transforming local people's lives.
- First, ask if there are any specific issues they would like to raise with you. [If there are and you can't respond immediately, say you'll write after the meeting.]

3. About your service

- Explain in brief the services that you provide and the role of SLT in the local community. Give them key facts and figures.

- If possible, use case studies of your work to demonstrate the difference you've made to people's lives.
- If applicable, highlight how your service is contributing to any local health and social care services redesign, new ways of working, and new models of care.
- One point to raise is the importance of SLTs and clinical managers being involved in discussions with providers and commissioners because they can help with service re-design that supports improved patient care and efficiency savings leading to better value.

4. Supporting local people with communication and swallowing needs

- Do you want your MP to undertake any action locally?
- If so, what do you want them to do? For example, do you want them to write to the local CCG asking about service provision?
- **Check this with your managers.**

5. Highlighting your service's work nationally

- If they ask what they can do nationally to help, you can suggest the following:
 - join the APPG on Speech and Language Difficulties which exists to raise parliamentary awareness of the issues – the Chair is Geraint Davies MP and the Co-Chair is Lord Ramsbotham. RCSLT can send them further details.
 - highlight the work of your service in relevant parliamentary debates or through parliamentary questions.
 - highlight the work of your service – and the value of speech and language therapy in general – to their own party's relevant spokespeople.

6. AOB

- Make sure you have asked for your MP's views on what you have said and respond, or promise to follow up with any questions that you cannot answer.

7. Close

- Thank your MP again for their time.
- Ask if they could have a photograph taken with you. **Check with your communications team about any other promotional work you can do.**
- Ask if it would be ok for you to send them occasional updates by email of your work. If they say yes, ask what the best email address is to contact them on.
- Tell them to get in touch with you if they ever have any queries.

Remember to:

- Read a short biography of them in advance – this can help you to tailor the meeting to suit their particular interests. Look at their website and/or Twitter account to check their recent activity. If they have done anything relevant to speech and language therapy recently, you can work that into the conversation.

Their parliamentary speeches can be accessed via:

- <https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/Members?house=commons¤tFormerFilter=1>

Their parliamentary questions can be accessed via:

- <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-questions-answers/>

If you would like any further support, please contact RCSLT.

- Ask them for their views, not just talk at them – this way you can develop a dialogue and identify points of agreement (what your MP is really interested to help you with).
- Write up your notes from the meeting. Draft a prompt thank you letter to your MP with a reminder of any actions. Brief RCSLT on the outcome of the meeting.
- Maintain your relationship with your MP. If they are agreeable, send them occasional updates about your work, but don't bombard them with material. Invite them to any events you might be having. If you host any events in which awards are handed out, ask them to give one of them out.