

# Talking to your MP about Dementia Research

## Building a Relationship with Your MP

As a constituent, your voice is extremely important to your MP. That means your input and experience of dementia – as a person living with it, as a carer, or as a person who has been impacted by the condition – is welcome and valued.

Begin by introducing yourself to your MP, either in person at their constituency ‘surgery’ or by contacting their office. If appropriate, thank your MP for their past support for dementia research, or let them know that you would like to see them get more involved and learn more about Alzheimer’s Research UK. The purpose of advocacy is to build a relationship of trust and goodwill toward the work of the charity. Our message to government is a positive one, with the goal of educating MP’s to help them develop good policy in support of dementia research.

Alzheimer’s Research UK’s Policy and Public Affairs team can help you prepare to contact your MP, and you’ll find some useful resources on our website. Don’t forget that you can point your MP to our web pages, blog and social networks if they’re interested in finding out more. If an MP or their staff would like us to send more information, please make sure to let us know and we will follow up with them.

## Participating in Meetings, Surgeries or Public Events

Most MP’s have meetings at Westminster and hold surgeries in their constituencies to meet with voters and hear about issues that are important to them, as well as holding public meetings on specific topics. It’s best to call the MP’s office to determine the best option for you and possibly schedule an appointment. Times and locations for public meetings are often on the MP’s website. Take advantage of opportunities to get to know your MP and to communicate your support for dementia research, as they are eager to learn what is important to you.

## What to Do at Your Meeting

If you attend a meeting at Westminster, a surgery in the constituency, or any event where you may have contact with your MP, there are several ways you can make the most of the encounter. First, find out information about your MP such as their party affiliation and if they are part of the government or shadow government. This will help you to know where their interests may lie, and give you insight into what they may be able to do to support dementia research.

Next, think about your comments in advance, since it is possible you will have limited time to discuss your views and it is important to get across your key message. MP’s are interested in what interests you, so do not hesitate to share your thoughts. It is okay if you do not feel comfortable speaking as an expert on dementia research, because Alzheimer’s Research UK can follow up any questions with more information. The most important thing to communicate is that dementia research is a priority to you - you may find that your personal experience has given you more insight than you think.

## Helpful tips to get you started:

**Get personal.** Tell a brief story about your experience, so your MP understands why dementia research is important to you.

**Bring your friends.** Recruit friends, family or colleagues to attend an event with you. Having them in the room will boost your confidence, and it sends a message that dementia affects more than just the person with the diagnosis.

**Have handouts.** Alzheimer's Research UK has resources available to print or order on our website, to help your MP learn more about dementia and what they can do to support our work.

**Be helpful.** Offer yourself as a resource. Give the MP your contact information and express that you would be happy to provide additional information.

**Follow up.** Write down any questions that come up that you are not able to answer. After your meeting, the Policy and Public Affairs team can help you find the right information if you contact us at [policy@alzheimersresearchuk.org](mailto:policy@alzheimersresearchuk.org).

### Keeping the Dialogue Going

Follow up your meeting to thank your MP and let them know that you appreciated the time they took to listen. If they requested more information, such as the number of people in their constituency living with dementia, or what research is taking place in the area, contact Alzheimer's Research UK and we can provide you with more information to pass along. If they offered to send a letter to a Minister or do something else to show support for dementia research, inquire about their progress. Finally, if they would like to meet with Alzheimer's Research UK staff or possibly visit a lab funded by our grant, please let us know as soon as possible and we'll make the arrangements.

### Let Alzheimer's Research UK know what you've been up to

We'd love to hear about the campaigning actions you've taken, no matter how big or small. If we know you've contacted your MP about dementia research, we can get in touch with them to ask if they'd like to learn more about our work – so please let us know what you've been up to!

If you have any questions about campaigning or how you can make a difference, please email us at [policy@alzheimersresearchuk.org](mailto:policy@alzheimersresearchuk.org) or call 01223 896618.

