

Advice on engaging with MPs

September 2020

Who are my MPs?

You can find your MPs by clicking [here](#). Remember it is important to contact MPs for neighbouring constituencies, not just the constituency your college is based in.

Why am I contacting them?

To secure their support for the campaigns SFCA is co-ordinating in 2020 to:

1. [Raise the Rate](#) of funding for sixth form students to at least £4,760 per year
2. [Protect Applied General Qualifications](#) (e.g. BTECs)
3. [Create the Capital](#) by introducing dedicated capital expansion and maintenance funds for sixth form providers
4. Reform the process for [establishing new sixth form provision](#)

The links above take you to the dedicated campaign pages on the SFCA website that will be updated throughout the year. [Sixth form education: priorities for 2020](#) provides a helpful summary of all four campaigns in one place.

How should I secure their support?

The most effective way to secure buy-in from MPs, social distancing regulations permitting, is by inviting them to the college and then meeting them on a regular (ideally termly) basis. Template letters to MPs can be found in the SFCA members area [here](#). The comprehensive spending review email is the one to prioritise. Some tips for a successful visit:

Format. The ideal meeting will have a. some one-to-one time with the principal/senior team (which could be conducted before or after the visit via videoconferencing if safer), b. some time with students, and c. a photo opportunity. The time with the principal/senior team is useful in building a rapport and sharing information/concerns that it may not be appropriate to share with a wider audience. The student time can take a variety of forms such as a Q&A session, visiting an A level politics class and lunch with students. It is always worth briefing students so their messages are broadly consistent with yours.

Content. Use the meeting to add local colour to the national messages in the four national campaigns. Some campaigns will be more important to you than others, so feel free to focus on those that are the highest priority for your institution (for example, your college may not offer AGQs). Always follow up after a visit and aim to get a termly meeting in the diary if possible.

Photo opportunity. During the visit, get a picture of the MP, ideally with students, and tweet the photo using one or all of #RaisetheRate, #CreatetheCapital and #ProtectAGQs. Share the picture

with your MP's office and encourage them to send out a press release to the local media. The [Raise the Rate](#) campaign has posters and social media infographics, and more information is available on each campaign website.

What does success look like?

Ultimately, success is ensuring that your local MPs are *active* supporters of our campaigns campaign. Some MPs will be able to get more publicly involved than others. Backbench MPs can table written and oral questions about the campaigns (we can help to formulate these), secure a parliamentary debate, and support the campaign on Twitter etc. You should ask your MPs to do all these things when you meet them, and write to both the Secretary of State for Education and the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the campaigns. While serving ministers and others on the 'payroll vote' are unable to get as publicly involved, they can still have informal conversations with HMT and DfE ministers and write private letters setting out the case for change.

Comprehensive spending review

In the run up to the comprehensive spending review at the end of this year, our two priority campaigns are #RaisetheRate (for revenue funding) and #CreatetheCapital (for capital funding). You can read our submission to the spending review [here](#).

Please email your local MPs using [this template](#) and ask them to write to the Secretary of State for Education and Chancellor of the Exchequer to support both campaigns. You can also write directly to the Secretary of State and Chancellor; their contact details can be found [here](#).

Where can I find out more?

For more information on our campaigning work, contact James Kewin james.kewin@sixthformcolleges.org or Noni Csogor noni.csogor@sixthformcolleges.org at SFCA.