

# MEET YOUR PROSPECTIVE PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES



**We want every candidate standing to be an MP at the next General Election to be asked what they plan to do to tackle poverty if they are elected. Use this toolkit to plan, prepare for and host conversations about poverty with your local candidates.**

## Planning and preparation

The aim of meeting with the candidates standing for election in your area is to enable meaningful conversations to take place with prospective political representatives about tackling poverty. These suggestions are tailored to help make that happen.

- The final list of Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) standing in your constituency won't be formally announced until later in the election cycle. You can find out which candidates have already been announced here:

[Who can I Vote For \(click here to visit\)](#)

[Wikipedia \(click here to visit\)](#)

The candidates might not have public contact details available yet. You may be able to get in touch with candidates via their local party. Most constituency boundaries are changing at the next General Election. [Click here to check the impact on your constituency.](#)

- Nominate one person to contact and liaise with the candidates in advance of the meeting.
- Arrange a mutually beneficial time and venue for the meeting. This might be in a community or faith space, or online. Where possible, meetings in-person are likely to be more engaging and productive for everyone involved.
- Meet with one candidate at a time. These meetings are not hustings events - they are about encouraging meaningful conversation with your candidates. Meeting with candidates individually will help with this.

## Do we need to meet with every candidate standing in the election?

It's important to reach out to the candidates standing in your area with a credible chance of being elected. To achieve change, we have to work with politicians from across the political spectrum. If you do not want to reach out to particular candidates and are working under the banner of Let's End Poverty, it is important to have an objective, impartial reason for not including them. This might include: local prominence of some parties over others; the number of elected representatives at a local or national level; recent election results in the area; security concerns. If you are working with charities to arrange the meeting, remember that charities must be impartial in their campaigning. Electoral law also requires third-party campaigners to demonstrate impartiality. [Click here to read our guidance on this.](#) Even if every candidate hasn't been announced yet in your area you can get started now, and reach out to new candidates when they are announced.

## **Who else to invite**

Bring together a range of people from your community who are passionate about tackling poverty to form your meeting. Include people who can speak from their experience of being on the frontline of poverty, either through their personal struggle against poverty or their work in local community groups to support their neighbours facing hardship, e.g. foodbanks, local pantries, debt advice centres.

When you consider who to invite, think about the message you want to communicate to your candidates:

- Who is leading the way on tackling poverty in our community? What insights can they share about what makes a difference to people's lives?
- What stories do we have to tell to show what's happening in our community, and who is best placed to tell them?
- Who can share insights into how local issues connect with what's going on at a national level?

The group you invite shouldn't be too big - we'd suggest 8-15 people participating. The meeting will be more productive if it is a private meeting with an invited group of people, rather than an event open to the public. This will help you plan and prepare well.

## **What do we want to say?**

Meet in advance to plan what you want to share with your candidates, and the questions you want to ask them.

- Use your local knowledge to share stories of insight into how poverty affects the local community.
- Demonstrate how the reality of poverty in your community connects to the national context, such as challenges with social security and support structures. This might involve some research into the impact of policies and systems related to poverty. You can find some links to useful resources on this at the end of the toolkit.
- Research any campaigns or activities that you are already involved with and any specific policy asks or recommendations they have.

## **Practising for success**

When you meet together in advance, to boost your confidence you might like to:

- Rehearse the meeting, and maybe even role play how you will ensure the meeting stays focussed.
- Practice sharing your story or insight with the group before sharing with your candidate.

## **What would good outcomes from meeting with your candidates look like?**

- Afterwards, the candidate can share something from the meeting that was memorable or meaningful to them.
- The candidate commits to meeting with you again after the election, if they are elected.
- You gain a sense of what the candidate's interests are and areas you can follow up on to build a continuing relationship.

# Template for the meeting

## In advance

- Establish roles for different people in the meeting to keep the conversation on track. This could include:
  - A chair or facilitator for the meeting, whose role is to introduce and intervene if the meeting is going off track and help keep to time.
  - 2-4 people to tell stories of insight into the community, including a mix of stories from lived experience and local organisations.
  - 1-2 people to ask questions to the candidate.
  - Someone to take notes
- Set up the room as a circle of chairs if possible, rather than a theatre style set up, and avoid putting the candidate at the front of the room. This will encourage group wide conversation, rather than just a Q&A.

## Sharing your story

Open the meeting by introducing everyone and sharing why the people who are gathered are motivated to bring about an end to poverty in the UK.

- Invite two-four people to share a story that demonstrates the impact of poverty within the local community. These can be pre-prepared, and kept relatively short and focussed.
- Invite one or two people to respond to the question “What are your hopes for what the next government could do differently to tackle poverty?”

## Ask the candidate

Invite the candidate to respond to what you've shared with some specific questions:

- What are the values and experiences that motivate you to tackle poverty?
- What are your hopes for what a future government will do to tackle poverty in the short and long term?
- If you're elected, how will you use your role to make those hopes become a reality?
- How can we work together to make this happen in our community and across the UK?

Invite different people to ask these questions, to help keep the meeting on track.

## Remember...

- Engage in good faith with your candidate. If they have agreed to meet, presume that they would like to hear from you and engage in meaningful conversation.
- Look for common ground, and identify ways to work together.
- Inviting your candidate to speak about short and long term goals might help them look beyond their party manifesto and towards their personal hopes for the future.
- Try to avoid the meeting going off track, or becoming about a really specific issue. Have some phrases on hand you can use to help you move forward, if you are getting stuck on particular issues or areas of disagreement, such as “returning to our topic...”.
- The focus of this meeting is on meaningful conversation. To encourage this, try to keep the meeting and its outcomes private by not sharing them in the press or on social media. The candidates you meet with might want to share pictures from the meeting on their own platforms and in the media. You are within your rights to discourage or not agree to this.

## Template invitation to your candidates

Dear [name]

I am getting in touch with you as one of the Prospective Parliamentary Candidates in [Your Constituency name] to invite you to meet with a group of local constituents to discuss poverty in our community.

As constituents, we are concerned about the impact of rising and deepening poverty in our local area, and across the UK. With more than 1 in 5 people experiencing poverty across the UK, it is deeply important to us that whoever is elected to represent our community as our MP is committed to challenging poverty and working towards an end to poverty in the UK. As a group, we believe that the UK should be a country where everyone has enough to eat, where everyone has a good quality of life, where all of us can wake up in the morning with hope, and where no one is held down by poverty. However, the poverty people are experiencing in the UK are deepening, as more people face destitution and struggle to afford the essentials for a decent life.

Ahead of the upcoming election, we are keen to hear about your motivations for standing for election, your perspectives on poverty and where you see opportunities for change. We would also like to share with you something of the impact of poverty in our community, what we are doing to respond to the urgent and ongoing needs of our neighbours struggling against poverty. The meeting will be a private meeting with a group of people from across our constituency, including [You may want to name some of the local groups represented here].

We would be pleased to arrange a mutually convenient time and location for the meeting with you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards

[Your name and contact details]

## Research tools from some of our supporting organisations

Some of our supporting organisations have produced resources and reports to demonstrate the impact of policies and systems on increasing poverty in the UK. Click on the links below to find out more.

The Trussell Trust: How to end the need for foodbanks in the UK. [Click here to explore policy briefings.](#)

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation: Deep poverty and destitution. [Click here to explore research.](#)

Child Poverty Action Group: Child poverty in the UK. [Click here to explore factsheets.](#)

Christians Against Poverty: The impact of debt on poverty and living standards. [Click here to read the report.](#)

Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN): Food insecurity and Health Inequalities. [Click here to explore resources.](#)

The Salvation Army: Homelessness and Poverty. [Click here to explore information.](#)