

## Creative ideas for engaging with your MP

Reaching out to your MPs can really pay dividends. But how do you get an MP interested in your work? How can you keep developing your relationship over time? We have collected several examples below to give you an idea of what other housing associations have found to work. If you have a great example which you would like to share, [please get in touch](#).

The examples below set out how three different housing associations have built a positive relationship with their local MP. This includes:

- One Housing Group, who arranged for young people from one of its school youth centres to take a tour of Parliament with their MP Jim Fitzpatrick.
- St Mungo's, who arranged for the local Conservative MP to visit one of their services and meet clients and staff. This allowed the team to show him the service and tell him more about the challenging policy environment.
- North Star, whose programme of engagement and visits for all its MPs has both built goodwill and resulted in MPs taking quick action if policy challenges arise.

### **One Housing Group and the local Labour MP, Jim Fitzpatrick**

*By Aisha Vance, Public Affairs and Policy Manager*

One Housing works across 27 boroughs. A significant amount of our stock is in Camden, Islington and Tower Hamlets. Many of our younger residents come from disadvantaged backgrounds and it's always been important for One Housing to support these young residents through our after school youth centre programmes.

With so much going on in the political world, One Housing wanted to engage with these young people and enable them to have the opportunity to visit Parliament in hopes that they would get inspired by the political process. It was also a good opportunity to foster a positive relationship with their local MP. We decided to launch the pilot project in Tower Hamlets in Jim Fitzpatrick's ward.

Jim was absolutely fantastic. His office set up the tour and afterwards Jim spent an hour discussing with the children (aged 9-14) how Parliament works. The children had questions prepared to ask Jim and they were very enthusiastic and excited to be in Parliament.

### **Poplar and Limehouse MP Jim Fitzpatrick said:**

"Getting young people involved in politics is so important for all of us. We must inspire them to want to make a difference and listen to their views. Decisions made now on issues like building more homes on the island will ultimately affect their future."

**12-year-old Casey Nelson and Taylor Sheeky said:**

“We were able to see the inner parts of Parliament that you wouldn’t see on TV. It’s amazing that we then had the chance to ask our local MP Jim Fitzpatrick questions about what’s important to us in East London. It’s a privilege to be here.”

**St Mungo’s and the local Conservative MP**

*By Beatrice Orchard, Policy, Public Affairs and Research Manager*

St Mungo’s runs services to support people who are homeless in almost 100 parliamentary constituencies. We work with our local MPs in order to improve their understanding of the varied and complex issues that affect the lives of people who are homeless, encourage them to challenge and influence policies in an informed way and to fulfil our commitment to building positive relationships with our neighbours and local stakeholders.

We regularly invite MPs to visit our services to see our work and meet our clients and staff. We also know they only have a limited number of days they can spend in their constituencies and on these days there are many demands on their time. Therefore, when we need to ask our local MPs for support on a particular policy or piece of legislation, we also invite them to meet us in Parliament. This gives us an opportunity to explain our work and the evidence we have to support or oppose government policy, and also provides another chance to invite them to visit our services.

Recently, we met a local Conservative MP we had not worked with previously in Westminster to discuss the Homelessness Reduction Bill. Our main objective for the meeting was to persuade him to attend the second reading debate of the Bill. He didn’t commit at the meeting, but he did accept our invitation to visit one of our hostels serving his constituency. This gave us another chance to discuss the Homelessness Reduction Bill and during the visit he took steps to clear his diary in order to attend the second reading debate.

**North Star’s programme of engagement with local MPs**

*By Angela Lockwood, Chief Executive*

North Star works across 11 local authorities with around the same number of MPs. Each year the chief executive visits all MPs at least twice and sends all newsletters, annual reports, invites to openings and anything that seems relevant. We arrange low key photo shoots on schemes, invite MPs to visit projects in their constituency and follow them on social media. Any MP enquiry is followed up immediately with a detailed response.

Of course MPs are busy, have specialist interests and some are more connected to housing associations than others. However, we have constituents in common as many are our tenants, so there is a natural link between them and us.

We work hard at MP relations, which are invaluable when we need their help, as demonstrated by the great response and support we had from MPs in relation to the Local Housing Allowance cap for supported housing. Even the Conservative MP in our area supported this issue and personally spoke with the then Communities and Local Government minister. A few years ago, the Stockton MP held a mini summit in our offices at very short notice with Dan Jarvis MP who was at the time a shadow minister. We worked with the MP to arrange and co-ordinate this event which was very successful.

While it takes effort to get some MPs to visit schemes, they are always impressed when they do, and the relationship continues to strengthen as a result. All in all, we work hard at being a great and first choice partner/confidante/support for MPs and are persistent in our efforts.