



Welsh Parliamentary Advocacy Guide

Meeting with your MS

#MEAction UK has developed this guide to give you the basic tools to help you to feel comfortable meeting with one of your Members of the Senedd (MS) either in person or virtually. MSs are there to represent YOU, and your personal story is your most important asset.

Here we take you through 4 easy steps for meeting with your MS.

1. Find your MS

Each of the 16 new Welsh constituencies is represented by 6 Members of the Senedd. To find your MS's contact details, enter your postcode on the Senedd website [here](#).

2. Research your MS (optional)

This step is optional, jump to the next stage if you have limited energy! Researching your MS will help you prepare for the meeting, as you can find out their interests and if they've previously spoken about ME.

i) The Senedd [website](#) shows your MS's records on: select committees they are on/have been on, their voting record and written or spoken questions and the responses.

ii) Have a look at your MS's website, Facebook or Twitter feed. These will help you understand your MS's current priorities.

iii) [TheyWorkForYou](#) provides a good overview of your MS's voting record and registered interests.

3. Book an appointment with your MS

Contact your MS's office to arrange an appointment or go to their drop-in surgery. Drop-in surgeries are opportunities for constituents to voice their concerns and are often advertised in local papers and in libraries. Some MSs may be able to speak to you outside of their surgery times, and may agree to speak to you on the telephone or via video conference (e.g. Zoom), or to visit you at home if you are unable to get to the surgery. If meeting an MS as a group, please be aware they may have a maximum number of people they see at one time.

i) **Use our email template** in [Appendix 2](#) to request a meeting with your MS. If you have a personal connection, be sure to add that to your request. You must **provide your address, including your postcode**, as MSs are only required to respond to people who live in their constituency. You should alter the email template to explain any accommodations you need to ensure the meeting is accessible, including if you need to do it by phone/skype or at your own home.

ii) Follow-up a week later with a call to your MS's constituency office if you haven't received a response.

4. Meeting Preparation, Meeting and Follow-up

When meeting with your MS they will want to know - **What actions do constituents want me to take?** and **Why should I take action?**

i) Write an email to your MS beforehand, outlining everything you want to say during your meeting. Include your 'Ask', what you'd like to discuss and factsheets/information about ME.

The 'Ask' is the action you are requesting the MS to take, and **we have provided an example of asking for a service for severe and very severe ME patients in [Appendix 1](#)**.

There are general actions your MS can take in order to increase their knowledge of ME, if they express interest which will make them more likely to support any specific campaigns, such as a debate at the Senedd. It's important to decide on which 1-2 'Asks' you will be putting to your MS.

ii) Explain brain-fog/cognitive impairment/sensory sensitivities. If you are writing to your MS in advance of the meeting, you may find it useful to explain these things at this point. Do ask how long the appointment is likely to be and plan accordingly. Ask if you can meet online to conserve your energy.

iii) Make a checklist of points you wish to cover to refer to during the meeting. **We have provided the key message in [Appendix 1](#)**.

Meeting

A good rule of thumb for a 15 minute meeting is:

- 5 minutes for introduction/basic facts
- 3-5 minutes for your personal story
- 5 minutes for the 'Ask' and closing

i) Take fact sheets/information about ME with you and leave these factsheets behind for your MS.

ii) Tell your personal story. Succinctly describe your history and the impact ME has had on you and, as appropriate, loved ones. Given the time constraints, it's critical to stay focused and, as best as possible, relate your story to the Ask.

iii) Be very clear about the action that you want your MS to take (your Asks).

iv) Ask for a likely time frame within which these actions will be completed.

v) Ask to be kept informed of what action has been taken and copied in on any responses etc.

vi) Take a photo with your MS to share on social media.

Be positive, and stay focused on your message. If your MS or their assistant says something offensive or inaccurate, gently correct them, i.e. let me explain why ME is not a matter of simply feeling sleepy at times, or forcing yourself to push through.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Also, it's okay to say that you don't know the answer to their questions. Just say you'll get back to them with an answer. Email us at admin@meaction.org.uk if you need any assistance.

Follow-Up

i) Email us at admin@meaction.org.uk to let us know who you are, who you met with, and what came out of the meeting. And let us know if you need help handling the follow-up or responding to questions. Please keep us updated on any information you receive which could be useful for campaigning.

ii) **Use our email template** in [Appendix 3](#) to send a 'Thank you for meeting me email' a couple of weeks after the meeting. This also allows you to check on progress, if any has been made regarding your Asks.

iii) Even if you've been given a "no" to your Asks, stay in touch! It's important to make sure that your MS remembers you and knows that you are not going away. Send periodic emails to the office to keep the momentum going! A good excuse to email them is to include a recent article/news clip/scientific finding that you can tell them about.

iv) Write an article for your local newspaper about your meeting and include a photo from the meeting if you took one. (Email admin@meaction.org.uk if you'd like help with the article)

Appendix 1

'Asks'- Actions your MS can take

1. ME receives a tiny percentage of the research funding awarded to other chronic illnesses. For example, ME has been shown to be more disabling than Multiple Sclerosis and yet receives at least 20 times less research funding in the UK. We urgently need a commitment to funding biomedical research commensurate with disease burden, and to compensate for decades of under investment.
2. Even after the updated NICE guideline on ME/CFS there is no effective treatment for ME and GPs receive little or no training into the disease. Many patients report being disbelieved by their doctors. You could ask your MS to lobby to make training on ME mandatory for doctors and direct them to this [CPD accredited module](#) and this [NHS elearning on ME](#).

Ideas for engaging your MS

- Watch Unrest on [Apple TV](#) or [YouTube](#)
- Watch the short "[I got a virus](#)" film
- Watch Jen Brea's [Ted Talk](#)
- Read our ME resources
- Issue a statement on social media, in support of ME patients and biomedical research
- Appear in a photograph of the meeting to allow constituents to publicise the work being done
- Pledge to support people with ME in the Senedd by:
 - Agree to be notified of future campaigns supporting people with ME
 - Write to the relevant minister
 - Ask a question in the Senedd. If you would like help thinking of a question prior to meeting your MS email us at admin@meaction.org.uk.
 - Pledge to attend debates about ME
 - Sponsor a Member Bill

- Share information on ME with party colleagues and appropriate agencies
 - Give your MS the opportunity to choose which of the parliamentary actions suggested they are willing and able to do. You are of course free to make up your own Ask or to adapt an Ask to the specific interests/experience of your MS.
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Appendix 2

Requesting an appointment: email example

This is a basic sample email. Feel free to alter it and use your own words, but try to keep it short.

Subject: Request for Meeting Regarding Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME)

Body: Dear *[insert your MS's name]*,

My name is _____ and I am one of your constituents, my postcode is *[insert postcode]*. I have *[had ME/cared for someone with ME for ? years]*. Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) is a complex, debilitating, and chronic disease affecting over 700,000 people in the UK. ME causes profound neurological, immunological and metabolic dysfunction.

[Add personal or local information that will help illustrate the issues you are concerned about. Make it as personal as you are comfortable with.]

I would welcome the chance to meet with you to discuss the current situation of people with ME in your constituency. *The decision to set up this service in Wales is within the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care's authority, so I am asking you to set up a meeting and present the urgent case for healthcare for the very sickest people who have the least healthcare. (please use your own wording if possible).* Please let me know when you are available.

Thank you for your attention,

[Your Name]

[Your Contact Information - contact phone number, address with postcode]

Appendix 3

Thank you for meeting me: email example

Subject: Thank You for Meeting Regarding Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME)

Body: Dear *[insert your MS's name]*,

I am writing to thank you for meeting with me on *[insert the date of your meeting]* to discuss Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME).

We discussed *[insert a very brief summary of what you discussed]*. I requested that you take the following actions:

- *[state the 'Asks' here, bullet points are good if there are more than one.]*

I appreciate your interest in this matter, and would be very grateful if you could keep me updated on any progress and developments with these actions.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and for your interest in this very important issue,

[Your Name]

[Your Contact Info - contact phone number, address with postcode]