Engage and influence your MP: a toolkit
About the Society

The British Society for Immunology (BSI) is the leading UK membership organisation working with scientists and clinicians from academia, industry and healthcare to forward immunology research and application around the world. Our friendly, accessible community consists of 3,500 immunologists, giving us a powerful voice to advocate for immunological science and health for the benefit of society.

The British Society for Immunology’s mission is to promote excellence in immunological research, scholarship and clinical practice in order to improve human and animal health. We accomplish this by:

• Working with our members to support current and future generations of immunologists

• Sharing our passion for immunology through meetings, publications and the media

• Building up an understanding of our work by engaging with the public and those working in the research and health environments

• Working with partners in pursuit of our mission, building on common interests.

Find out more about our work at [www.immunology.org](http://www.immunology.org).

Policy at the BSI

The BSI has a dedicated Policy and Public Affairs team who are responsible for providing our independent advice and guidance to government and policymakers and information for our members and the public. We do this through several mediums including letters to MPs, reports and face-to-face meetings.

We strive to support our members’ interests and are always interested in hearing about policy areas that are most relevant to immunologists. You can get in touch with our team using the contact details below to discuss specific policy topics or for general information about our work.

Meet your BSI Public Affairs team

**Shannon Lacombe**
Policy & Public Affairs Manager
Tel: 020 3019 5917
Email: s.lacombe@immunology.org

**Eleanor Sherwood**
Policy Officer
Tel: 020 3019 5906
Email: e.sherwood@immunology.org
**Why should you engage with your MP?**

Engaging with your local MP is one way in which you can have your voice heard by the person elected to represent your interests in parliament. Engaging with parliament as a researcher can result in a number of positive outcomes.

Reaching out to your MP can feel intimidating, especially if you have never done it before. We hope that this toolkit will give you the confidence and guidance you need to contact your MP and make your voice heard on the topics that matter most to you.

**What are MPs’ responsibilities?**

MPs are elected into the House of Commons to represent the people of his/her constituency. There are 650 constituencies (and so 650 MPs) in the UK with an average of 70,000 people in each. MPs appreciate hearing the concerns of the people they represent. They can take your voice to Parliament by asking a question in the House of Commons, proposing a parliamentary debate or they may even sit on a select committee and have a more formal role in scrutinising the government on the topic.

**When should I contact my MP?**

MPs can offer advice and can engage on matters for which UK Parliament is responsible. This includes Brexit, the NHS, the science budget, the industrial strategy, immigration and so on. Many of the issues that concern UK researchers are relevant to, and should be raised with, MPs. Some issues that are not the direct responsibility of Parliament, such as council tax and housing, are topics which can be handled by your local council instead.

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**How this toolkit can help you**

This toolkit is designed to help you engage and influence your local MP. It includes information on how to identify your local MP, ways to contact him/her, as well as some top tips and key advice from the BSI.

**We’re here to help you**

If you would like more information or if you have questions that remain unanswered at the end of this guide, please do get in touch with the BSI Public Affairs team. We can provide you with up-to-date membership figures, briefings on key topics and general guidance for building relationships with Parliament.
### MPs

Find your MP and learn more about MPs, including details of their parliamentary career and contact information.

The options in the search box allow you to find MPs by postcode, constituency or MP's name; or to filter the list by name, constituency, location, party or gender.

#### Members of the House of Commons

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surname, First name</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abbott, Ms Diane</td>
<td>Hackney North and Stoke</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abraham, Debbie</td>
<td>Oldham East and Saddleworth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adams, Debbie</td>
<td>Selby and Ainsty</td>
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<td>Akhtari, Sim</td>
<td>Hitchin and Harpenden</td>
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Showing 649 out of 649 results for Name

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Constituencies

The UK is currently divided into 650 areas called parliamentary constituencies, each of which is represented by one MP in the House of Commons.

#### Find out more about parliamentary constituencies

Contact the House of Commons

The House of Commons Enquiry Service answers questions about the business, history and membership of the House.

Telephone: 020 7219 4272
Email: House of Commons Enquiry Service

Telephone: Dial 13001 followed by 020 7219 4272

The telephone enquiry service is open between 10am-12 midday and 2pm-4pm (Monday to Friday).
How to engage with your MP

You can find information on how to contact and engage with your MP on the Parliament website at www.parliament.uk/get-involved/contact-your-mp. You can also search for individual MP websites to find contact information and engagement opportunities.

**Step 1: Identify your MP**

If you are unsure who represents you in Parliament, there are a number of resources to help you identify your local MP. The Parliament website allows you to search via your postcode at www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps.

**Step 2: Get in touch**

Many MPs spend Monday to Thursday in Parliament and spend Fridays in their local constituencies. Most MPs will hold face-to-face surgeries, either drop-in or by appointment, where local constituents can directly raise concerns and ask questions.

It is important to always provide your address when you contact your MP. MPs are only required to respond to people who live in their constituency, so it is essential that you highlight this. However, MPs with research institutes, hospitals or biotech companies in their constituencies are often keen to engage with individuals who work at these organisations (but don’t necessarily live in their constituency). If the issue you wish to raise is related to your work, you could consider getting in touch with the MPs for both your home and work addresses (if they fall under different constituencies).

Before you contact your MP, make sure you have a clear ask – what do you want to raise with them and what are you hoping to achieve from the engagement? If you can’t clearly articulate what you want, your MP won’t be able to understand what you want!

Do your research. All MPs have an individual webpage on the UK Parliament website. Make sure you know who your MP is, and what his or her interests and parliamentary activities include. This will be very helpful when reaching out to him/her. For example, you may find that your MP sits on the Science and Technology Committee and is likely to be very interested in hearing from a local researcher.
Step 2: Get in touch (cont.)

Key things to remember when contacting your MP

✓ Explain who you are and include your address.

✓ Explain clearly what you are contacting them about, why this issue impacts you personally and its importance to your work or life.

✓ Outline a key ask or action for your MP. This may begin with requesting a face-to-face meeting if you have written an email or letter.

✓ Give your MP a clear way of contacting you.

✓ Follow up. MPs are very busy and may receive hundreds of enquiries a day so may not be able to respond immediately. If you haven’t heard back after about two weeks, you should follow up your email or letter with a phone call, or make an appointment to visit them at their local surgery. If you have heard back from your MP, thank them and ensure the relationship continues.

Ways to contact your MP

By email or letter: Sending a personalised email or letter (to: House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA) to your MP is an easy and effective way to contact them.

By phone: Writing is always a good first step, but if this isn’t possible, you can ring your MP’s parliamentary office. To call their House of Commons office, dial 020 7219 3000 and ask to be transferred to their office giving your MP’s name.

By social media: Social media is a fast and effective way of contacting MPs on key issues. If you’re strapped for time or want a quick response, why not tweet them your questions?

What makes a strong letter?

✓ Relevant

✓ Short and succinct – no longer than one and a half pages

✓ Targeted

✓ Actionable

✓ Make an offer, e.g. to meet in person
Template letter to request a meeting with your MP

Subject line: Meeting request: [insert name], [immunologist, clinical immunologist] at [insert your institution/employer]

Dear [insert your MP's name] MP

I am a [immunologist, clinical immunologist] [living/working] in [insert constituency] and I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you in person the issue of [insert issue, e.g. research funding].

[Add some information about immunology – showcase your research and why it is important] As a nation we are world-leading in our immunological research and rank first for the quality of our research in infection and immunology in the G7. This remarkable pre-eminence has been built up over many years of global scientific collaboration and information exchange.

[Make the letter as personal as you feel comfortable with – adding a personal touch to highlight your concerns will make your letter much more effective, e.g. how does research funding affect your work and your laboratory?]

I would like to meet with you to discuss these issues because immunological research is vital in so many important areas of medical science: vaccination, cancer, autoimmune diseases and allergies. Immunology is also a key foundation of the development of the next generation of therapies by the life sciences industry.

If you feel a meeting would be mutually beneficial, please contact me on [insert email address] or [insert phone number] at your earliest convenience.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

[insert your name]

[insert your home/work address and postcode]

[insert your email and contact telephone number]
Step 3: Arrange a meeting or visit

The best way to engage with your MP is face to face. If you are unable to meet your MP at a local surgery, request a meeting in Parliament and ensure they have a clear way of contacting you to set a meeting up.

Conclude your letter or email with an offer to meet at their convenience. For example, you may wish to say something like this:

“I would like to offer to meet with you to discuss [topic]. If you believe that a meeting would be mutually beneficial, please contact me at [email] or [phone number] to make the arrangements.”

Step 4: Meet your MP

After you confirm a meeting with your MP, the next step is to prepare. Remember, MPs are incredibly busy and their days are commonly interrupted with the unexpected. This means your meeting may be short and you must be prepared to provide as much information and clarity in as little time as possible.

You should think about what your MP would want to know about the issue you plan to discuss. Having a few key facts or statistics available to use can help to illustrate your argument. Your prior research should give you an idea of his/her interests, parliamentary activities and background. This insight will help you steer the conversation and guide you on the appropriate level of detail.

There are several actions that can come out of meetings with your MP. In Parliament, your MP can table a question or even an oral debate on the topic. Your MP might also be willing to speak at an event or visit your place of work (e.g. a laboratory to meet researchers). If your MP is a member of a select committee, he/she can take on a more formal role in scrutinising the government with regards to your issue.
Step 5: Follow up and stay in touch

Keep the relationship going! After your meeting, follow up with a thank you. If there were actions agreed upon in the meeting, summarise those. And of course, keep the BSI Public Affairs team informed if you have met with your MP regarding your research!

‘You should think about what your MP would want to know about the issue you plan to discuss. Having a few key facts or statistics available can help to illustrate your argument.’

Response to the BSI Public Affairs team from the previous Science Minister, Jo Johnson MP
Key points from the BSI

Here are some points about immunology research in the UK to help with your engagement*:

• The British Society for Immunology is a learned society representing approximately 3,500 immunologists working in academia, clinical medicine and industry. We are the largest immunology society in Europe.

• The UK ranks first in the G7 for the quality of research in infection and immunology.

• The Government has committed to spending 2.4% of GDP on R&D by 2027. Currently, total R&D spend (public and private) in the UK is 1.78%. The OECD average is 2.4%.

• The UK has an exceptional record of securing EU research funding. Between 2007–2018, UK-based researchers secured €8.8bn in funding, with the UK having contributed €5.4bn to the programme.

• The UK’s immunology research workforce is international. 42% of the academic workforce are from abroad, with 26% from an EU country.

• The BSI has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Chinese Society for Immunology (CSI) to establish a collaborative partnership and build international links.

BSI resources
The BSI has a number of reports and resources that you can use to find out more detailed information and facts to aid your engagement. These are available to download free from our website. If you would like printed copies of any of our reports to take with you to your meeting with your MP, please contact our Public Affairs team.

BSI reports
(available from www.immunology.org/reports)

• Careers in immunology
• Immunology and the UK’s life sciences industry
• Immunology: an international, life-saving science

Additional BSI policy resources
• Consultation responses
• Briefings and position statements
• Brexit Briefcase

Contact us
The BSI Public Affairs team are always happy to answer your questions and help you prepare for a meeting with your MP. We’re also keen for you to keep us up-to-date on any meetings of engagements you have! You can find our contact details on page 2.

*Information correct as of June 2018.
Further support and links

BSI website:
www.immunology.org

Parliament website:
www.parliament.uk

Hansard Online:
This contains a detailed outline of everything your MP has spoken about in Parliament. www.hansard.parliament.uk

Membership of All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)
These are informal cross party special interest groups – there’s an APPG for almost everything! You can find a list of groups at www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/parliamentary-commissioner-for-standards/registers-of-interests/register-of-all-party-party-parliamentary-groups/

Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) is a membership body and leading parliamentary advocate for science and engineering. The BSI is an active member of CaSE.
www.sciencecampaign.org.uk

Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) is the UK’s national membership organisation for health and medical research charities. The BSI is an active member of the AMRC.
www.amrc.org.uk
The British Society for Immunology’s mission is to promote excellence in immunological research, scholarship and clinical practice in order to improve human and animal health.