

Yes, we want to hold our MP to account

We are willing to hold whoever is elected to account for their actions as our Member of Parliament on a regular basis. Please sign us up for the MP accountability network:

Name:

Church/group:

Contact address:.....

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Email:

Phone:

2010 Parliamentary Constituency:

(Note: Many of the parliamentary constituency boundaries are changing.

For details of the new constituencies see: <http://bit.ly/2010constitutencies>)

We may wish to publish contact details of members of the MP accountability network to enable others within your constituency to get in touch. Please tick here if you do not want your details to be made publicly available.

Please return to Janet Ashton, MP Accountability Network, Church Action on Poverty, 3rd Floor, Dale House, 35 Dale Street, Manchester, M1 2HF.
Tel 0161 236 9321. Email: info@church-poverty.org.uk



The General Election is a great opportunity to ensure that politicians take account of the real issues that affect ordinary people. That, after all, is why we elect them!

One of the keys to restoring faith in democracy is ensuring that the MPs we elect at the General Election are held to account for what they do on our behalf in Parliament. Churches can play a key role in this task. Many already organise parliamentary 'hustings' with candidates during the Election campaign. But holding MPs to account is not something to be done only once every five years!

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A commitment to on-going dialogue

Real accountability requires a commitment to regular and on-going dialogue. For this to happen, two things are required:

- **All candidates seeking election to Parliament are asked to pledge that they are willing to account to their constituents for their actions as MPs.**
- **Local groups (eg Churches Together groups) pledge to organise regular and on-going meetings in the constituency to allow this to happen.**

All MPs hold surgeries and most do a lot to help constituents on an individual basis with specific problems. However, there are not many occasions when MPs can discuss wider issues with their constituents. The political agenda is largely set by the national media and so usually does not reflect the concerns of ordinary people. If we are to make our views count at all in national politics, we need to be able to talk to our MP about these issues and for the MP to listen - not just to feed us the party line. This would also help MPs to understand where their constituents are coming from on particular issues and to use those views to inform their discussions and debates in Westminster.

Most MPs are likely to welcome support from local groups who are able to commit to getting a good number of people together, to enable them to sound out on issues, listen to constituents' views and learn how they have been voting. Your aim should be to build a long-term relationship, and engender trust and mutual respect – even when you disagree!

This is also a great opportunity to engage with new MPs of which there will be a high number this time who will be just beginning to establish ways of being accountable to their electorate.

Join the MP accountability network

Would your church, Churches Together group (or any other local group you are part of) be will to join an MP accountability network?

Democratic accountability will be hugely strengthened if groups across the country are willing to hold our MPs to account on a regular and on-going basis. By working together, we can ensure that issues we care passionately about – poverty, social justice, climate change - are firmly on the political agenda.

To help you hold your MP accountable, we will provide you with advice, support and quarterly briefings on issues you can raise with your MP – and ways of monitoring what they are doing on your behalf at Westminster. You are, of course, more than welcome to raise issues of your own!

How often would we need to meet our MP?

There is no hard and fast rule – though it will probably make sense to plan around 3 accountability meetings a year – one for each Parliamentary term. The best time to meet is likely to be at the weekend (Friday evening/Saturday morning) – as MPs are in Westminster during the week.

What issues would we raise with our MP?

Hot local topics are likely to get a good turnout at the meeting – and your MP should want to hear what you have to say. We will also provide at least 3 briefings a year on issues – including topics currently being debated in Parliament, which you can press your MP on – or hear their views.

What support will we receive as part of the MP Accountability Network?

- 3-4 briefings a year on topical issues to raise with your MP
- Access to training on 'how to hold your MP to account'
- Information on how to keep up to date with what your MP is doing in Parliament.

For additional General Election resources for churches visit Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's site at: www.churcheselection.org.uk