**Engaging your local MP (contribution by Andy Pope)**

The best place to begin is to build up a succinct profile of your local MP. Start with their political party! It makes a big difference if they are in Government or opposition. A Government MP is more likely to support current programmes, where as you can talk with opposition MPs about change. Find out what their role is, do they Head a Department or are they Undersecretary to a Minister. This helps to determine where they will have the most influence to bare, and allows you to shape the issues you discuss with them. A quick YouTube search will give you the last speech they made to the House, which is important to know because the likelihood is that it is what they are most interested in / concerned about right now. Find out their background, what they did before becoming an MP, what are their interests and how long have they been in the position. This information will allow you to present your position and the work you do in a way that will engage them.

Build a relationship with your MP, don’t look at it as a request for a one-off meeting where you try to get everything out there. Broaden the discussion over two or three meetings that give them the time to digest what you have said and come back with questions. Make it a conversation, ask them questions too, it’s much more engaging than telling them things.

Top 5 Tips

1. Meet with your MP. Don’t just invite them to an event. At an event you will not have their full attention and it becomes an opportunity for them, rather than an opportunity for you.
2. Offer them something. Provide them with current and relevant data or information about their constituency. It allows them to promote your work more easily and see the impact you have made.
3. Stick to the issue. MP’s will get all sorts thrown at them in the course of a week and if you drift off point your message will get lost.
4. Make it good for them. MPs like good news stories about their constituency and if it allows them to promote what goes on locally, they are more likely to shout about it if it makes them look good.
5. Ensure they have at least one key “take away”. They are only people too, so don’t be overawed by speaking to an MP, but have in your mind one key message you want them to remember from your conversation, and ensure you reinforce it.

Could you ensure that you discuss the FIT 4 HHA document (emailed on the 18th March and will be on the SAMhub shortly).

**FIT 4 HHA** = Government commitment to **F**unding**, I**nfrastructureand **T**ime allows the network to deliver on a promise and commitment to ensure we have **Happy, Healthy, more Active children.**

**FIT = Policy ask HHA = Network commitment**

**Insight to what I did when I met my MP in October (contribution by Vincent Brittain)**

The meeting I had with my MP was very productive. Even though he is a new MP and a back bencher this did not stop him raising the importance of PE and Sport in schools in the House Commons which resulted in the Leader of the House of Commons commending the work of the charity and agree of the importance that PE & Sport has in schools. There is a media clip on my twitter that I have pinned @BrittainVincent if you wished to take a look. Interestingly the Leader of the House of Commons now follows the charity @inspire\_plus.

Meeting

* When you contact your MP you may be contacted back by someone who organises their diary. It is important to build a relationship with this person as they will be the gatekeeper to their diary/movements!
* I managed to get the morning with my MP. I started his visit by presenting to him what we did as a charity and some of the key impacts of our work. I also showed the Dr William Bird film ‘movement is life’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYPRV-Ynilk> which I feel resonated with him a lot and helped him understand the wider importance of children being more active.
* I informed him of the current decline of children’s physical activity levels and mental health during/since the first lockdown and how we are helping schools in addressing them, lots of stats to refer to (see below links for data).
* I then made sure he was aware of the importance of the PE and Sport Premium funding which enabled schools to access the support of the charity.
* I WOULD NOW BE REFERENCING ‘FIT 4 HHA’ DOCUMENT!

School visit

* We then moved onto schools where we were met by Head teachers who showed PE lessons in action some of these were being assisted by our PE apprentices.
* We also had one of our ambassadors do some work with children around mental health.
* Both PE and ambassador session took place outside!
* We made sure children spoke to the MP and stressed how much they enjoyed PE/Sport etc (how it made then feel etc)
* The Heads were sure to confirm;
	+ The importance of PE and sport in not only for the child’s health and wellbeing but also for their ability to learn better.
	+ Importance of the charity’s support to the school highlighting areas they wished.
	+ The importance of the PE and Sport premium funding and making it quite how clear how detrimental it be for the children without it.

Links for data you may want to use in the letter of during the meeting (don’t forget your own local data!)

<https://www.sportengland.org/news/childrens-activity-levels-down-many-embrace-new-opportunities>

<https://www.youthsporttrust.org/system/files/resources/documents/Return%20to%20School%20-%20PE%20%20School%20Leads%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

<https://www.youthsporttrust.org/system/files/Evidence%20paper%20-%20The%20impact%20of%20Covid%20restrictions%20on%20children%20and%20young%20people%20-%20Ver%202%20-%20July%202020.pdf>