

Arranging a Workplace Visit for a Labour MP or Candidate

Resource Sheet 4

Why are workplace visits useful?

Workplace visits give our members the chance to get to know their local Labour MP or candidate. This is important because:

- If members feel they know their MP or candidate, they're more likely to vote for them or help in their campaign.
- MPs, their staff and Labour candidates can help our members with problems they are experiencing.
- Our members can also tell their Labour MP or candidate about issues that affect them – the earlier a visit takes place, the more chance the MP or candidate has to act on any cases where they may be able to help.

Who is the Labour MP for the constituency where your workplace is?

MPs and candidates will only usually visit workplaces within their own constituency.

All MPs can be contacted (before an election is called) on 020 7219 3000 at the House of Commons.

If you don't know which constituency your workplace is in or who your MP is, call the House of Commons on 020 7219 3000 and ask for the Information Office – give them your workplace's postcode. They will tell you your MP's name, contact details and which party they represent. Alternatively, you can log on to findyourmp.parliament.uk

What if I don't work in a constituency with a Labour MP?

In this case you can invite the local Labour candidate to visit.

You can get their contact details by ringing or emailing your Labour Party Regional Office (see list inside) or calling Usdaw's Politics Office on 0161 249 2452 or by emailing politics@usdaw.org.uk

Contact your Labour MP or candidate

Ring or email your Labour MP's office or candidate to invite him or her to visit your workplace and ask which are the best times and dates for a visit. The MP or candidate will want to meet as many people as possible so try to include breaktimes in the visit.

How do I convince my boss this is a good idea?

- Most managers are quite happy to build contact with the local MP – they never know when they may be useful! Some companies actively encourage visits.
- Check with your Area Organiser if your company is likely to welcome a visit.
- If you think your boss is likely to agree, either you or your Area Organiser should make a request and agree on a suitable date and time that the MP or candidate is able to attend.
- If you're worried that an approach from Usdaw may be turned down, ask the MP or candidate to write directly and ask if they can visit the site, to meet the manager, union reps and staff.
- Always offer for the MP or candidate to meet the manager first but emphasise that the main purpose of the visit is to meet Usdaw members and staff.

What if my employer says no?

If your boss isn't happy with a formal visit, they may agree to:

- An informal, drop-in visit to the canteen or rest room.
- A visit on a specific issue – eg to discuss local childcare provision and explain tax credits, or to discuss the need for better public transport to and from the workplace.
- A visit that ties in with an Usdaw campaign or Spotlight Day.

If your boss still won't agree, you could always:

- Arrange a meeting nearby during a break period or before and after a shift change – for instance at a local pub or cafe already used by members.
- Arrange a meeting to invite the MP or candidate to, or invite them to your next branch meeting. Lay on refreshments if possible and publicise the meeting by putting up posters, etc.

Setting up the visit – checklist

Once you do get agreement to a visit, you just need to make sure it will run smoothly.

- Arrange the date, schedule, time and place to meet.
- Make sure everyone knows – the MP or candidate, manager, reps, members and Area Organiser.
- Put up a poster a week before advertising the visit and ask if there are any issues members want to raise with the MP or candidate.
- Ask your Divisional Office for Usdaw and Labour Party membership forms and leaflets, such as Rights at Work, Tax Credits and Working Parents, etc or contact the Stationery Department at Usdaw's Central Office on 0161 224 2804.
- Do you want a press photo? Local papers may well turn out. Check that your manager is happy with the press taking photos and if they are, contact your local newspaper(s) to ask if they'll attend. Arrange a photo-call either at the start or end of the visit. Take a camera so you can take pictures for Usdaw and the MP or candidate to use if the press don't turn up.

- The day before the visit, speak to your manager and reps to confirm arrangements. Talk through the visit and any issues that may come up with the MP. Ring or email the MP or candidate to confirm the arrangements.

The visit itself

- Meet the MP and accompany them throughout the visit.
- Make sure you don't spend longer than scheduled with management and as long as possible with staff.
- Introduce the MP to the reps and members you know, and they'll introduce them to other staff.
- Always check if members have any issues the MP could help them with.
- Make a note of any members who are being affected by Government policies and see if they are prepared to appear in the Union's magazine Arena, the local paper or a Labour leaflet. This makes a really good local 'story' and helps others find out so they know what the Labour Party is campaigning for and how Labour's policies will help Usdaw members.

Looking ahead

Use the visit as a basis for building a constructive relationship:

- Look ahead to future visits – the MP or candidate may want to return about a particular issue, or do an hour of an Usdaw member's job – on the checkout, packing bags, etc. This makes a great photo opportunity and also gives them a really good understanding of what it's like for our members. Some MPs or candidates may even want to come recruiting with you – particularly at a street stall or in a shopping centre.
- During and after the visit, see if any members would be prepared to help the MP or candidate's election campaign by delivering leaflets, stuffing envelopes or contacting voters.

Suggested schedule

- 9.30am Meet the MP or candidate outside the site.
- 9.35am Meet the manager.
- 9.45am Tour of the site. Chat to members on the way round.
- 10.00am Meet members in the canteen during their break for tea and a chat. Arrange for the reps to introduce the MP or candidate to members. Recruit any staff who aren't already members!
- 10.25am Press photo-call with members and the manager.
- 10.30am End of visit.

After the visit

- Get feedback from members and pass it on to the MP.
- Make sure any casework or issues that members have raised are followed up and dealt with.
- Arrange a further visit if possible.

Contacts

Please keep Usdaw's Politics Office informed of visits and how they went.

Contact Usdaw's Politics Office on 0161 249 2452, or email politics@usdaw.org.uk for information, advice and help with campaigns and visits.

Labour Party Regional Offices

East of England	Tel: 01279 625 860	email: eastern@labour.org.uk
Greater London	Tel: 0207 783 1170	email: london@labour.org .
West Midlands	Tel: 0121 569 1900	email: wmids@labour.org.uk
East Midlands	Tel: 0115 943 1777	email: eastmidlands@labour.org.uk
Yorkshire and the Humber	Tel: 0192 429 1221	email: yorkshire@labour.org.uk
North West	Tel: 0192 557 4913	email: northwest@labour.org.uk
North	Tel: 0191 246 5276	email: north@labour.org.uk
Scotland	Tel: 0141 572 6900	email: scotland@labour.org.uk
South East	Tel: 0118 923 9400	email: southeast@labour.org.uk
South West	Tel: 0117 972 9440	email: contact@laboursouthwest.org.uk
Wales	Tel: 0292 087 7700	email: wales@labour.org.uk

Any questions?

Please contact Usdaw's Politics Office

Tel: 0161 249 2452

email: politics@usdaw.org.uk

Usdaw
*Union of Shop, Distributive
and Allied Workers*

