



# Making your voice heard at meetings

**Attending meetings is a fantastic way to try to improve heart health services. Whether it's a meeting with a Politician or a local health organisation, your input and thoughts will always be valued, as a constituent or as a heart patient representative.**

Official meetings can seem daunting, but remember that these people just want to hear what you have to say and your opinion will be valued.

## Arranging meetings

- Contact your local politicians' office to see when their surgery hours are – these are times set aside for them to meet with their constituents locally. You can find contact information for your local politician if you live in England, Scotland or Northern Ireland here : [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) or you can find your local Welsh Assembly Member here: [www.assemblywales.org/memhome/member-search.htm](http://www.assemblywales.org/memhome/member-search.htm)
- Make notes of the points you want to raise and be clear about the actions you would like to see happen.
- If possible, arrange to go to your meeting with a small group of people who have the same concerns to help show that your issue affects more than one person. Remember to let an organiser know the names of everyone who'll be attending.
- You should also think about attending any public meetings, for example with the local council or health service board. (You may only be able to observe, rather than take part, but that can still be a useful research and networking exercise).

## When attending a meeting

- If you're meeting with a politician, take some photos so you can use them to get some local media coverage to raise awareness about your issue.
- Think about what questions you might be asked and prepare responses.
- You don't have to have all the answers so if you're asked something that you don't know, note it down and say that you'll get back to them later.
- It's also useful to leave key facts and figures with the person you're meeting so they can refer to these later.
- If you've been asked to speak at a meeting with health professionals a few things to keep in mind to make the most of your time are:
  - Keep your slot clear, well structured, concise and free of jargon.
  - Find out how long they want you to talk for
  - Use visual aids where appropriate.
  - Prepare your case in advance.
  - Use the relevant level of language for your audience.
  - Remember that you're there as yourself, so don't feel that you have to be an expert.

## Follow up

After your meeting send a thank you letter or email with a reminder of anything that they said that they would do and send them any information that you said you'd provide.

## Was this guide helpful?

Get in touch with any feedback you have, positive or negative, so we can make these guides as useful as possible. Email [campaigns@bhf.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@bhf.org.uk)

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