

# **A Home for Everyone**

**A toolkit for homelessness services to  
campaign in the weeks leading up to  
the 2024 general election**



**Homeless Link**

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## Introduction: An election has been called

**Rishi Sunak has called an election for July 4<sup>th</sup>.**

With over 100 MPs already confirmed to be standing down and large vote swings expected in many areas, this election promises to bring a raft of new MPs into Parliament. The next few weeks before polling day offer an unparalleled opportunity for homelessness organisations to engage Prospective Parliamentary Candidates standing for election.

For too long the root causes of homelessness have been ignored. For too long fragmented government departments working in silos have created policies which widen the cracks people can fall through.

Therefore, we want these new politicians to enter Parliament with a good understanding of homelessness and the policies needed to end it, meaning they have the tools to advocate for people experiencing homelessness and homelessness services.

Over the next few weeks, **we've set an ambitious target of homelessness services engaging at least 100 candidates across the country**. If we can achieve this together, homelessness will remain high on the political agenda and whoever forms the next Government will feel the pressure to act.

We know that services are extremely busy, so this toolkit should provide you with the tools you need to engage candidates in the run up to polling day.

Of course, if you have any questions, or would like any further support in this area then please don't hesitate to get in touch.

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## Our vision to end homelessness together

### 1. Everyone has a safe, secure, suitable home in which to thrive

Safe and suitable housing is essential to ensure everyone can live happy, healthy, stable lives. **The next Government should commit funding to building 90,000 social homes per year for the next 10 years and continue the unfreeze of LHA rates beyond 2024/25.**

### 2. Every corner of Government working together and playing their part

Preventing and ending homelessness cannot be the responsibility of just one government department. **The next Government should adopt a cross government strategy to end homelessness.**

### 3. A homelessness system that works for all

**The next Government must ensure there is a diverse network of services available and that sustainable housing options are accessible for every person who experiences homelessness.** As a minimum standard, these services should embed person-centred, trauma-informed care.

### 4. Sustained investment to prevent and end homelessness for good

**The next Government should commit to reviewing all current spending across government linked to homelessness** and replacing the existing piecemeal and short term funding structures with a single, long-term ring-fenced homelessness support fund, designed to flexibly adapt to local and individual needs.

- For more detail on our policy asks, read our [Manifesto to End Homelessness](#) or [Executive Summary](#).

# Engaging Prospective Parliamentary

## Candidates

### Identifying PPCs

The first step in starting your campaigning work is to identify the candidates standing for election in the area(s) in which you work. Once Parliament is dissolved on 30<sup>th</sup> May, all people standing for election will be dubbed Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs), including MPs who won election in 2019. In some seats not all candidates have been selected yet. But nominations will close on June 7 so expect them to be announced soon. The easiest way to find out who is standing in your area is to use the search function in the website [Who Can I Vote For?](#)

### Constituency boundary changes

One important thing to note is, ahead of the next election, the 2023 Boundary Review is reorganising UK parliamentary constituencies to reflect population change. **This means that the current constituencies in which you work in may change in both size and name.** You can check whether this is the case via the [House of Commons website](#).

### Identifying PPCs in your area

The easiest way to find out the PPCs in the area(s) in which you work is to google the constituency name, the political party and 'parliamentary candidate'. For example; 'Hazel Grove Liberal Democrats parliamentary candidate.' From this, you should find the candidate's website and contact details. The House of Commons Library keeps a [tracker of MPs standing down on its website](#), so double check your current MP is standing again.

### Understanding the political context

It's important to understand the political context within your area. In most constituencies, it's likely that only two political parties have a realistic shot at winning election. Normally this will be the party currently in power and the party who won the second most votes in the 2019 election.

If you have limited time, contacting just the three main candidates for election is the best way to use your resources.

### Contacting PPCs

Once you have identified the candidates standing in the area(s) you work. The next step is to get in touch with them. Candidates for election normally have a website dedicated to their campaign with an email address to get in touch with them. You will find example and template letters in the appendix of this toolkit, **however it's important to personalise these as much as possible.**

Doing some internet research around candidates' interests can help personalise your approach. If they have previously served as an MP, **looking up things like whether they're part of an All Party Parliamentary Group and/or whether they sit on a Select Committee, as well as what have they said in the past about homelessness can be very helpful.** Useful websites include [TheyWorkForYou](#), which records what MPs say in the commons and how they vote and UK Parliament, which has details of membership of APPG's and Select Committees. For PPCs **that have not have been MPs before, try looking into their career path and understanding their interests to help mould your messaging.**

### Joint letters

If you work closely with other organisations within your local area, sending a joint letter signed by multiple organisations can be a great way to show that the issues services are facing are not confined to one organisation

### Meeting with PPCs

**While there are a few different ways to engage with PPCs, the most effective is for them to visit one of your services.** This helps them understand the work you do and the problems you face. Before a candidate for election does visit your service, there are a few things to think through.

Homeless Link is happy to help organise visits and send a member of staff to support on the day.

### Put together an agenda

Having a pre-agreed structure to the visit helps minimise disruption to your service whilst achieving maximum impact. It's good to put in time for the candidate to see how the service runs and supports people as well as some time with one or two members of staff to discuss the issues they face. Additionally, politicians often cite the personal stories they hear as drivers for their work in Westminster. Therefore, if possible, **organising for the candidate to talk to**

Please let us know if you have a scheduled meeting with an MP/Candidate

**someone with lived experience of homelessness, it could be someone currently accessing your services or who has done in the past, can be very effective.**

### Communications

Candidates will be keen to let local stakeholders and the general public know that they have visited your service. Scheduling time for some photos during the visit is a good idea to share with your supporters and on your social media channels.

Met with candidate(s) and want to shout about it? Take a look at our Communications Pack [via our website](#).

Of course, if you can't for any reason arrange a service visit, **meeting with candidates face to face or online is also fine**. Make sure you still consider the points you want to raise before hand.

### Prospective Parliamentary Candidate Pledge

We want as many candidates as possible to sign our below pledge. They can sign via an [online form on Homeless Link's website](#).

If elected as an MP, I pledge to champion the needs of people experiencing, and at risk of homelessness to help end it for good

**Please encourage them to do this. This will strengthen their commitment to the issue and help us and you to hold them to account if they are elected.**

### Using local events strategically

If you are interested in organising a local hustings, take a look at our [specific guidance](#) on how to set such an event up. But there are likely to be many events happening in your constituency between now and polling day which you can go along to and ask questions of PPCs. We've put together some suggested questions below.

#### PPC Questions

- How regularly will you engage with local homelessness organisations if elected?
- How will you advocate for policies to end homelessness in Parliament?
- If elected, how will you improve the availability of genuinely affordable and secure housing?
- Will you sign Homeless Link's pledge to champion the wellbeing and needs of people experiencing and at risk of homelessness?



## Election campaigning rules for charities

When campaigning in the run-up to a general election, there are certain rules that charities need to be aware of. **However, this should not put you off campaigning. The vast majority of charities only need to be concerned with the normal rules that govern charity campaigning.**

For more information on election campaigning rules for charity's, take a look at the [Government website](#) and this [handy guide](#) by the Sheila McKechnie Foundation.

Charities can never engage in what's dubbed 'party political activity' at any time, but they should be particularly aware of this in the year before a general election. Party political activity would include direct support of a party, politician or candidate. For example, sharing a social media post encouraging people to vote for a particular candidate. Charities can however engage in 'political activity', which are activities aiming to bring about or prevent a change in the law, policies or decisions of politicians and public bodies. For example, campaigning for political parties to commit to longer-term investment in homelessness.

However, it's important to note that it's not necessary to name a party or type of candidate in your campaign materials for it to be considered 'party political activity'.

[Watch back](#) a presentation from a charity law expert at our recent general election webinar (26:44 – 44:00)

**Advocacy material could meet the purpose test if it is positive or negative about a policy that is closely connected with a particular political party, close to the election, for example, in such a way that a reasonable person might think you are calling for the public to vote for or against that party.** Therefore, you should be extra careful about any content you create in the lead up to a general election.

There is also a myth that charities must register with the Electoral Commission to campaign in the run up to a general election. The Electoral Commission's Guidance states; "if you are a charity and abide by charity law and guidance from the relevant charity regulator, in most circumstances your campaign activity is unlikely to meet the purpose test." This means that, **as long as you don't engage in 'party political activity' there is no need to register with the Electoral Commission.**



## Appendix

### Example Prospective Parliamentary Candidate Letter

Dear Richard Pugh,

I am writing to you from Homelessness Rothermead to invite you to visit our homelessness accommodation and support service here in Rothermead during the election campaign.

Homelessness Rothermead work across the Rothermead area in three locations, providing accommodation and support to people experiencing homelessness. On average, we support over 500 people each year, providing accommodation to around 60 people at any one time, while helping them find independent accommodation and reintegrate into the local community.

We provide a vital service to people within the community who have often experienced significant trauma and need extra support to stabilise their life. But rough sleeping rose nationally by 27% in 2023, the biggest year on year percentage rise since 2015, and a record number of people are living in temporary accommodation.

I know from your past work in the NHS that you care deeply about public services and reducing inequalities. If you visit our services, you will have the opportunity to speak to frontline staff and people with lived experience of homelessness to better understand the issue and the policies needed to make a real difference to the lives of the people we support.

As a member of Homeless Link, I also would like to share their Manifesto to End Homelessness and urge you to sign their Prospective Parliamentary Candidate pledge. *If elected as an MP I pledge to champion the needs of people experiencing and at risk of homelessness to help end it for good.* You can sign it via this link.

Many thanks for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Doe, CEO at Homelessness Rothermead

## Template Prospective Parliamentary Candidate Letter

Dear ***insert candidate name***,

I am writing to you from ***insert service name*** to invite you to visit our homelessness accommodation and support service here in ***insert area*** during the short election campaign.

***Insert service name*** work across ***insert area*** in ***insert summary of services offered***.

We provide a vital service to people within the community who have often experienced significant trauma and need extra support to stabilise their life. But rough sleeping rose nationally by 27% in 2023, the biggest year on year percentage rise since 2015, and a record number of people are living in temporary accommodation.

***Insert summary of the candidates personal/professional interest in homelessness.***

If you visit our services, you will have the opportunity to speak to frontline staff and people with lived experience of homelessness to better understand the issue and the policies needed to make a real difference to the lives of the people we support.

As a member of Homeless Link, I also would like to share their Manifesto to End Homelessness and urge you to sign their Prospective Parliamentary Candidate pledge *If elected as an MP I pledge to champion the needs of people experiencing and at risk of homelessness to help end it for good*. You can sign it via this link.

Many thanks for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

***Insert name and job title***

## Key dates in the run up to polling day

### **Thursday 23 May 2024 - Thursday 30 May 2024**

'Wash-up' when the Government will try and get their chosen Bills across the line to Royal Assent.

### **Thursday 30 May 2024**

The formal dissolution of Parliament, when all Bills that have not made it to Royal Assent will be dropped and all Parliamentary activity will cease.

### **Friday 7 June 2024**

Deadline for candidate nomination papers to be submitted by 4pm, followed by publication of statement of all persons nominated at 5pm.

### **Between 5 & 16 June 2024**

Manifestos will be launched by the major parties, usually within a few days of each other.

### **Tuesday 18 June 2024**

Deadline to register to vote.

### **Wednesday 19 June 2024**

Deadline to register for postal vote

### **Wednesday 26 June 2024**

Deadline to register for proxy vote

Deadline to get free voter authority certificate (photo id)

### **Thursday 4 July 2024**

Polling Day.

### **Tuesday 9 July 2024**

New Parliament will be summoned to meet, the speaker will be elected, and members sworn in.

### **Wednesday 17 July 2024**

State opening of Parliament.

## What We Do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it. Our social enterprise supports the homelessness sector through specialised software, engaging training, expert consultancy, and impactful events that also helps to fund our wider work to end homelessness for good.

## Homeless Link

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# Let's End Homelessness Together

