

## Guidance on engaging candidates via visits

This General Election, we're asking candidates on all sides to pledge to protect people from hunger by ensuring we all have enough money for the basics.

**We think our next government could start working towards a future where no one needs a food bank by:**

1. **Ending the five week wait for Universal Credit**
2. **Making sure benefit payments cover the cost of living**
3. **Investing in local emergency support for people in crisis**

We have a huge opportunity to make sure there are MPs of all parties committed to ending the need for food banks. But with thousands of candidates across the UK, we simply won't be able to do this alone.

You can help by **inviting local candidates to visit your food bank** to discuss local and national issues around hunger and poverty, its drivers, and the policy changes needed to tackle it. While food banks can't be party political, they can raise the issues of hunger and poverty with candidates. Here's how:

- Invite your local candidates using our action [here](#) - it's important that **all** candidates are invited to make sure the visit does not look party political
- If candidates agree to visit, please read our Lobbying Act guidance [\[link\]](#) which should help you make sure you are complying with the Act and do not appear party political.
- If candidates can't visit, urge them to support on social media using our suggested social media posts [\[link here\]](#).
- Let the Trussell Trust public affairs team know when a candidate visits you, by emailing [ellie.thompson@trusselltrust.org](mailto:ellie.thompson@trusselltrust.org).

## The visit

Politicians should spend at least an hour at the food bank if they can, and speak to volunteers and people referred if possible. The visit should not be a photo opportunity but a chance for candidates to learn about your work and the reasons behind the need for food banks.

Here's some things you can raise with the candidates:

1. During the visit, you can discuss the level of demand for your food bank and the drivers of need
2. Ask them to pledge, publicly, to work towards an end to the need for food banks
3. If you are asked any questions that you don't feel comfortable with or don't know the answer to, please offer to take their contact details and let them know you will pass the message on to the Trussell Trust and that we will get back to them.

## Guarding against risk:

- **Media and communications** around the visit should be directed by the food bank:
  - Journalists, photographers, and camera crew cannot be invited to a politician's food bank visit without the express permission of the food bank manager
  - If there is a press release about the visit we would welcome being able to see it before it goes out, particularly if it mentions The Trussell Trust specifically
  - If photos are taken of the politician in the food bank with any volunteers, there should be no party political marketing material in the photo
  - No food bank volunteers photographed should be standing next to the politician in a professional capacity
  - If only one candidate has agreed to visit, there should be no publicity around the visit to ensure the food bank does not look politically biased.
- **Party political material:** In the lead up to elections, political candidates visiting are likely to wear rosettes. This is fine but we cannot accept any accompanying political campaigning material in food banks (e.g. placards/leaflets). We cannot have party policy or party political rhetoric being launched from the food bank, or with a food bank or Trussell Trust logo in view.
- **Policy announcements:** In the past, politicians have occasionally tried to launch party policy from a food bank. This is not acceptable – if a politician has proactively contacted you asking for a visit, you can refuse a visit if it is intended to discuss their election campaign or launch party policy as the food bank is an apolitical charity.
- **Managing unexpected visits:** If a candidate turns up unannounced at the food bank, you can refuse the visit if you feel they are there to speak to people as voters or publicise their election campaign, rather than learn about the issues facing people referred to your foodbank.

If you have any concerns or questions about engaging with a politician or political party, or have an unexpected visit from a candidate, The Trussell Trust is here to help – contact our public affairs team by emailing [ellie.thompson@trusselltrust.org](mailto:ellie.thompson@trusselltrust.org) and let your Area Manager know.