

Engaging during the run-up to the general election 2017

BMA

Get involved

Brexit aside, the NHS will, as always, be a key issue during this general election. As such, prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs) are likely to want to be fully informed on both local and national health issues. The run up to a general election is clearly an ideal opportunity for doctors to try to influence the views of the person who may become their next MP.

Contact your prospective parliamentary candidates

The best way to do this is by directly contacting your prospective parliamentary candidates. As soon as contact details are available for all candidates, an online tool will go live on the BMA website which will help you identify and contact your local candidates. The BMA is producing a series of short briefings for use with this online tool.

Use the BMA's manifesto

The BMA manifesto is now available. This outlines the association's five priority areas for the medical profession and wider health service, calling on the next government to commit to addressing them on an urgent basis. You can lobby ask your prospective parliamentary candidates to show their support the BMA's manifesto, and contact them directly.

A series of short briefings will be available shortly so that you can tailor your message to your constituency and include your own perspective on local issues. Bringing a local perspective will be key to influencing your candidates.

Face to face lobbying

Meeting face to face with candidates is often the most effective way to lobby. There may be local hustings events arranged in your constituency which would provide an opportunity to pose questions to candidates across the range of political parties and compare their positions on health and other issues. You can, of course, also email candidates directly with your own perspective on issues.

Campaigning at the election

The BMA is an apolitical organisation and will not, therefore, support or oppose any particular political party or candidate. As such, when commenting in public, including on social media, members must be mindful of this position and the BMA's public reputation. Members are reminded of the need to preserve a distinction between their activities and views as individuals, and those of the BMA.

The BMA is subject to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. The provisions of this Act mean that the BMA's resources (funds, services or property) may not be used in any way to endorse or oppose a political party, individual politicians or candidates in a political election. The BMA must also comply with the Lobbying Act which stipulates parameters for non-party campaigning and campaigners (see Lobbying Act briefing).

If members undertake any campaigning for or against a particular political party, they should do so in a personal capacity. The BMA is politically neutral and it is, therefore, important that they do not campaign in a BMA capacity, or use an elected position held within the organisation, to influence people to vote for or against a political party.

Social media

Elected BMA representatives who are active on social media should make clear that they are not speaking on behalf of the organisation and that their views are their own. When engaging with politicians or political parties, or using social media to comment on matters relating to the general election, during this period of regulated activity, members should either remove any reference to the BMA or make clear that they are commenting in a personal capacity, for example:

"All tweets in a personal capacity."

"All tweets my own views."

