



# Getting HIV heard in politics

What young women can do?

# Or more like What *can't* young women do?



← Bonita Norris: 22-year-old who climbed her first mountain last year has become the youngest British woman to reach the summit of Everest.

Pamela Nash MP: 25 yrs old, youngest MP in the UK



Vivian Howard, single mum, referee to the Liberian football team!



↑  
YOU!

Human Rights Defender!

# All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on HIV and AIDS

The APPG on HIV and AIDS is a Group of politicians from all political parties, who are interested in HIV/AIDS.

When the members of this Group work together through the APPG they can have much more influence than if they lobbied alone on HIV/AIDS issues.

The APPG works on HIV in the UK and HIV internationally.

I am the Adviser to the Group and I try to persuade MPs to take up HIV issues with the Government.

# What UK is the APPG lobbying on?

- Access to free treatment for people with HIV, in the UK and abroad.
- Increasing testing for HIV around the country.
- Sex education in schools.
- Access to welfare benefits for PLWHIV



# Does your country have an APPG on HIV & AIDS?

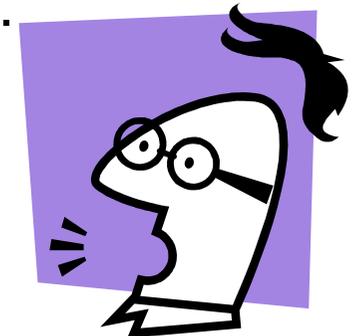
- Many do! Norway, Holland, Greece, Russia, Canada.
- To find out email your local MP or email the IPU at [postbox@mail.ipu.org](mailto:postbox@mail.ipu.org)
- If you have an APPG in your country you should contact them with your concerns and ask them to help you push for change.





# The importance of young PLWHIV speaking out

- Your vote counts. MPs take notice of their constituents.
- MPs are bombarded with information from lobbying organisations. Its hard for them to know which information is relevant to their constituents. If you don't tell them HIV is relevant they may not believe it!
- Personal experience is much more moving and easier to remember than a policy briefing.
- You may feel you sound young and inexperienced but actually you sound **AUTHENTIC** and different to the same old lobbyists.



# What can MPs do?



**They can help you with your personal problems** if you feel you are not receiving a good service from a publicly funded body.

For example if you have problems with the service you are getting from your HIV clinic or hospital (eg discrimination because of your gender or HIV status).



**They can raise your policy concerns** with the Government and ask Ministers if they will make changes.

A policy concern is an issue which doesn't just affect you, (it doesn't necessarily affect you at all) but affects many people across the country.

For example if you want to campaign against the criminalisation of HIV transmission.

# How to communicate with your MP



Rule 1

## Clarity

- Try explaining your problem or point to someone else.
- Together, jot down the key issues. Then, later, start your letter.
- Explain the problem clearly.
- If you *have to* explain something in detail consider attaching it as a separate document – giving just the basics in a cover letter.
- Ask the MP to do something specific. This could be to write to the relevant Minister, putting your views across.

# How to communicate with your MP



Rule 2

**Style**

- Keep your letter brief – no more than two sides, preferably typed!
- Don't be rude and avoid the urge to rant
- Always put your home address on the letter.
- See if you can get a friend to write about the same issue. The more letters an MP gets, the more notice they take.

# How to communicate with your MP



Rule 3

**Polite**  
**Persistence**

- If you don't hear back from your MP after three weeks, follow your letter up with a telephone call or email.
- Most MPs will have website with their contact details. You will probably speak to a researcher or assistant. That is fine.
- Your letter makes a difference, even if you feel you didn't get a good response. Letter by letter, the MP becomes more aware that HIV is an issue in your country.

# Optional Extras! (if you're going public....)

Photo opps and press releases



Rule 4

**Offer them a chance to  
look good in the  
media!**



# What result can you expect?

## **Personal issues**

MPs can't work magic, but they can often speed up a slow process, or give you good advice on how to solve your problem.

## **Policy Concerns**

Policy change is a long process and you shouldn't expect immediate results. An individual MP is unlikely to be able to change things overnight, even if they want to.

However if you work with friends and others who share your views and you persist, you can make things change for the better!

### **Examples of recent successes:**

**A ban on questions about HIV in job application forms!  
£6bn funding for HIV and health internationally.**



# Final Advice: Be Un-ignorable!

