



CHARTERED INSTITUTE  
OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

# Professional Lobbying

Introducing the UK  
Lobbying Register



[lobbying-register.uk](http://lobbying-register.uk)

As a Member of Parliament, you will probably be approached by lobbyists. You may be lobbied by businesses, charities, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, professions, trade associations, pressure groups and individuals, usually by people who are paid to lobby (as opposed to constituents, representing themselves or their families).

This leaflet sets out the standards of acceptable behaviour for professional lobbyists, what you should expect from them if they approach you, and what action you can take if you have concerns.

In most cases, lobbyists provide access to useful information and can genuinely support your role.

However, while interests have a right to be heard in the political process, professional lobbyists understand that it is your duty to serve your constituents and the public interest first.

They will recognise that they operate in a sensitive context and that lobbying should be ethical and transparent.

## What is “lobbying”?

Lobbying is an activity intended to inform and influence government policy and legislation. It is one of the key means by which information can enter political discourse, which can assist politicians and policy makers in reaching informed conclusions.

Modern lobbyists help their clients and employers understand legislative and political processes and create ethical and achievable objectives. They are skilled at introducing information into political debate in the most effective way to assist in the achievement of these objectives.

Lobbying can also be known as ‘public affairs’, or ‘government relations’, which are more common in job titles. As a function it can be a stand-alone specialism and part of a wider range of communications disciplines drawn into a broad campaign. Lobbyists can be independent practitioners (freelancers), work in agencies or as consultants to agencies. They can also work ‘in-house’, where they are employed to lobby specifically in support of their employer’s business.

# Professional lobbying

Lobbyists are subject to the law and must respect the rules, codes of conduct and regulations that govern the institutions or public bodies they are seeking to influence.

Professional lobbyists, in common with other public relations and communications professionals, should be skilled or qualified to carry out the services they offer and engaged in continuing professional development (CPD).

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) believes it is in the public interest for lobbying to be carried out in a way that:

- does not break the law or contravene any relevant regulations
- does not intervene in the relationship between an MP and their constituents
- is in accordance with an enforceable, independently administered code of professional conduct
- follows the exercise of reasonable professional judgement.

## Why is a voluntary Lobbying Register needed?

In 2014, the Government legislated to make it a criminal offence to carry out the business of consultant lobbying without disclosure via the Statutory Register of Consultant Lobbyists. This Statutory Register covers only consultant lobbyists representing third party clients, where the lobbyist communicates personally with the Government and is VAT registered. This is a very small proportion of the overall number of people who work as lobbyists in the United Kingdom.

We believe that the public is entitled to know who is seeking to influence public policy and law. We hoped that the 2014 law would provide for this adequately, but in our view, it does not.

We have therefore decided to maintain a voluntary register, the UK Lobbying Register, which is much wider in scope than the Statutory Register.

### **The UK Lobbying Register:**

- Is open to all professionals engaged in lobbying, whether they are CIPR members or not
- Requires them to abide by a relevant code of conduct (the CIPR's, if they do not subscribe to another)
- Provides MPs, peers and members of the public with a channel for making

complaints about the conduct of a registered lobbyist

- Is free of charge to register and search.

# 10 Professional behaviours you should expect from lobbyists

Professionals in any context should serve the public interest ahead of their clients or employers. Lobbyists should act with integrity and be ethical and transparent. Each of the behaviours below is relevant under the CIPR's Code of Conduct:

**1 Professional lobbyists tell you who they are and whom they represent** – including the nature of their client's or employer's interests.

**2 Professional lobbyists do not intentionally mislead you or your staff or anyone else in any way.**

**3 Professional lobbyists provide information that is accurate and true.** Lobbyists should make a reasonable effort to verify statements and they should be clear about what

they don't know to be accurate or true. No information should be deliberately omitted or obscured from briefings, statements or other material used in the course of lobbying where to do so would potentially create a misleading impression.

**4 Professional lobbyists do not offer bribes or inducements -** which includes gifts or excessive entertainment, whether or not the intention is to solicit a favour or preference.

**5 Professional lobbyists manage and avoid conflicts of interest.**

It is not acceptable for a professional lobbyist to represent two clients who compete in the same market or have a clash of interests. In the context of lobbying, a conflict of interest can also arise between the lobbyists' professional and personal political interests. Where this arises, the professional lobbyist is expected to cease relevant lobbying until any conflicts can be resolved. This might arise when lobbying while holding

elected or public office, pursuing a voluntary role in politics or working as a political adviser.

**6 Professional lobbyists respect confidentiality** – this is more than simply keeping a client’s commercial information confidential. Professional lobbyists, who may know politicians and civil servants socially, do not misuse privileged information for commercial gain.

**7 Professional lobbyists respect the rules and regulations of the institutions of government and representation wherever they work, and the codes of conduct that bind other professionals.**

**8 Professional lobbyists respect the public’s right to know about lobbying activity** – the Chartered Institute of Public Relations believes good professional conduct requires lobbying to be carried out in plain view. This means that professional lobbyists should be willing to publicly identify themselves and disclose the interests on whose behalf they lobby, as well as disclosing their clients. For consultant lobbyists, the 2014 Act made it a statutory requirement if they communicate directly with Government on behalf of a client and are VAT registered.

**9 Professional lobbyists observe rules, resolutions, codes of conduct and statutes in relation to employing or contracting elected representatives, members of Parliament (including members of**

**the House of Lords), holders of public office and public servants** – this includes any rules covering the periods of time after they have left those roles.

**10 Professional lobbyists do not use access privileges to lobby** – professional lobbyists who hold passes or otherwise have privileged access to the precincts of any Parliament, Assembly, Council or other elected body, or any Institution of Government, where that pass is not explicitly granted in relation to their role as a lobbyist, must not make use of it in the course of lobbying or otherwise abuse this privilege.

## Dealing with lobbyists

**A professional lobbyist will be able to answer the following questions immediately and without reservations:**

- Who do you work for?
- Who are you representing in this conversation?
- Are you signed up to the UK Lobbying Register (UKLR) or the Register of Consultant Lobbyists?
- Are you signed up with any other voluntary registration scheme? If so, which one?
- How do I hold you accountable for your lobbying activity?

## What should cause you concern?

- Any lack of clarity about whom the lobbyist is working for or representing
- Any indication that the lobbyist wishes to keep your meeting secret
- Any use of access privileges (e.g. a parliamentary pass) for lobbying purposes
- Any reluctance by the lobbyist to confirm in writing what they have discussed with you
- Any inducements, offers of gifts or excessive hospitality
- Any suggestion of payment in return for something you do in the course of your role
- Any indication that the lobbyist may be overstating or exaggerating the level of public support for their case

## What to do if you're concerned

- If the lobbyist is employed by a consultancy, check whether their organisation is signed up to the Statutory Register of Consultant Lobbyists by visiting [https://registerofconsultantlobbyists.force.com/CLR\\_Search](https://registerofconsultantlobbyists.force.com/CLR_Search)
- Check if the lobbyist is signed up to the UK Lobbying Register by visiting [lobbying-register.uk](https://lobbying-register.uk)

## Raising a complaint

- If you are unhappy with the conduct of a lobbyist who has signed up to the UK Lobbying Register or of a CIPR member who has failed to register, you can raise a complaint against them by contacting the CIPR <https://www.cipr.co.uk/ethics>
- The CIPR regulates the conduct of its members and has well-developed structures for the handling of complaints. The authority to do this derives from the Institute's Royal Charter. For further information visit: [cipr.co.uk/code](https://www.cipr.co.uk/code)

## About us

The CIPR is the Royal Chartered professional body for public relations in the UK. With over 10,000 members, we're the largest body of our type in Europe. We set standards through CPD, accreditation, training, qualifications, awards and the production of research, best practice and skills guidance. We advance professionalism in public relations by making our members accountable to their employers and the public through our Code of Conduct and searchable PR register. We facilitate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and award Chartered Public Relations Practitioner status (Chart.PR).





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