

# Lobbying Westminster and Whitehall for change

Vicki Nash

Head of Policy and Campaigns

Mind



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# Overview

- Background to Mind
- Background to UK's political system
- How and why Mind lobbies Westminster and Whitehall
- Current challenges



# What Mind does

Primary purpose:

“to make it possible for people who experience mental distress to live full lives, and play their full part in society”.



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# How Mind works

- Providing support
- Influencing policy and campaign for better mental health services
- Challenging discrimination
- Promoting well-being



# Westminster and Whitehall

## Westminster:

- House of Commons
- House of Lords

## Whitehall:

- Government departments
- Non-departmental public bodies (quangos)



# Westminster: House of Commons

646 elected representatives for constituencies  
across the UK

Have responsibilities to three main groups:

- Constituents (local people who elected them)
- Parliament
- Political party



# Westminster: House of Commons

Some issues 'devolved' to other institutions:

- Welsh Assembly
- Scottish Parliament
- Northern Ireland Assembly

Devolved issues: health, education, transport

Issues retained by UK government: defence, tax



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# Westminster: House of Lords

- 700+ unelected Peers, mainly appointed by government
- Most affiliated to a political party but some 'cross-benchers'
- Experts in many fields



# Westminster: House of Lords

Four key objectives:

- Scrutinising legislation (60%+ of its time)
- Holding government to account
- Investigating policy issues
- UK's highest court



# Whitehall

Impartial civil servants

“Yes Minister”

Working on policy issues day by day

Influencing the heart of policy debate



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# Whitehall: quangos

Result of 'downsizing' government

Independent but aligned to government departments

- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)
- Care Quality Commission



# Why lobby?

- Influencing change at the top
- Moving issues up the political agenda
- A warning shot



# Why lobby?

But it's changing.....

- Shifting the balance of power
- Darzi review
- 'World class' commissioning
- Role of Primary Care Trusts

= New targets to lobby at regional and strategic level



# How to lobby

- Bringing the voice of people who experience mental distress to the decision table
- Combining social, moral and economic arguments where possible
- Well-briefed staff and activists = pincer movement
- Role of professionals?



# Successes: Seroxat

## Problem:

- Increased risk of suicidal thoughts and acts of self-harm

## Tactics:

- High profile campaign aimed at public and politicians
- Role of media – Panorama



# Successes: Seroxat

- Targeting MPs at both national and local level

Result:

- Changes made to prohibit use of Seroxat with under 18 year olds



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# Successes: We need to talk

## Problem:

- Access to talking therapies very limited
- Long waiting times

## Tactics:

- Coalition campaigning
- Targeting MPs and national and local level



# Successes: We need to talk

- Behind the scenes discussions with civil servants
- Use of parliamentary processes: debates, parliamentary questions, writing to ministers

Result:

£170 million for talking treatments by 2011

Will hopefully lead to significant reduction in waiting times



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# Current challenges

- Monitoring implementation of Mental Health Act
- New government strategies expected
- Expenses controversy around MPs
- Local and European elections - weakened government
- General election by May/June 2010
- Recession



# Thank you!

Email: [v.nash@mind.org.uk](mailto:v.nash@mind.org.uk)

Tel: : (+44) 020 8215 2279

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)



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