

RED have been listening to constituents.

They told us how MPs could better listen to them.

This is a short summary of what we found...



1

Who we listened to

We interviewed:

2 couples and 3 single people in their homes

3 constituents at their MP's surgery

4 MPs, 1 London Assembly Member and 1 Local Councillor

1 surgery assistant and Local Council officers

We ran a workshop with 7 young people

We conducted 'voxpops' in Guildford and Sunderland



2

What we heard

Our democracy has low expectations of the public – they are expected to complain, protest, moan and only engage when there is a crisis:

‘Surgeries are for “sick” people.’

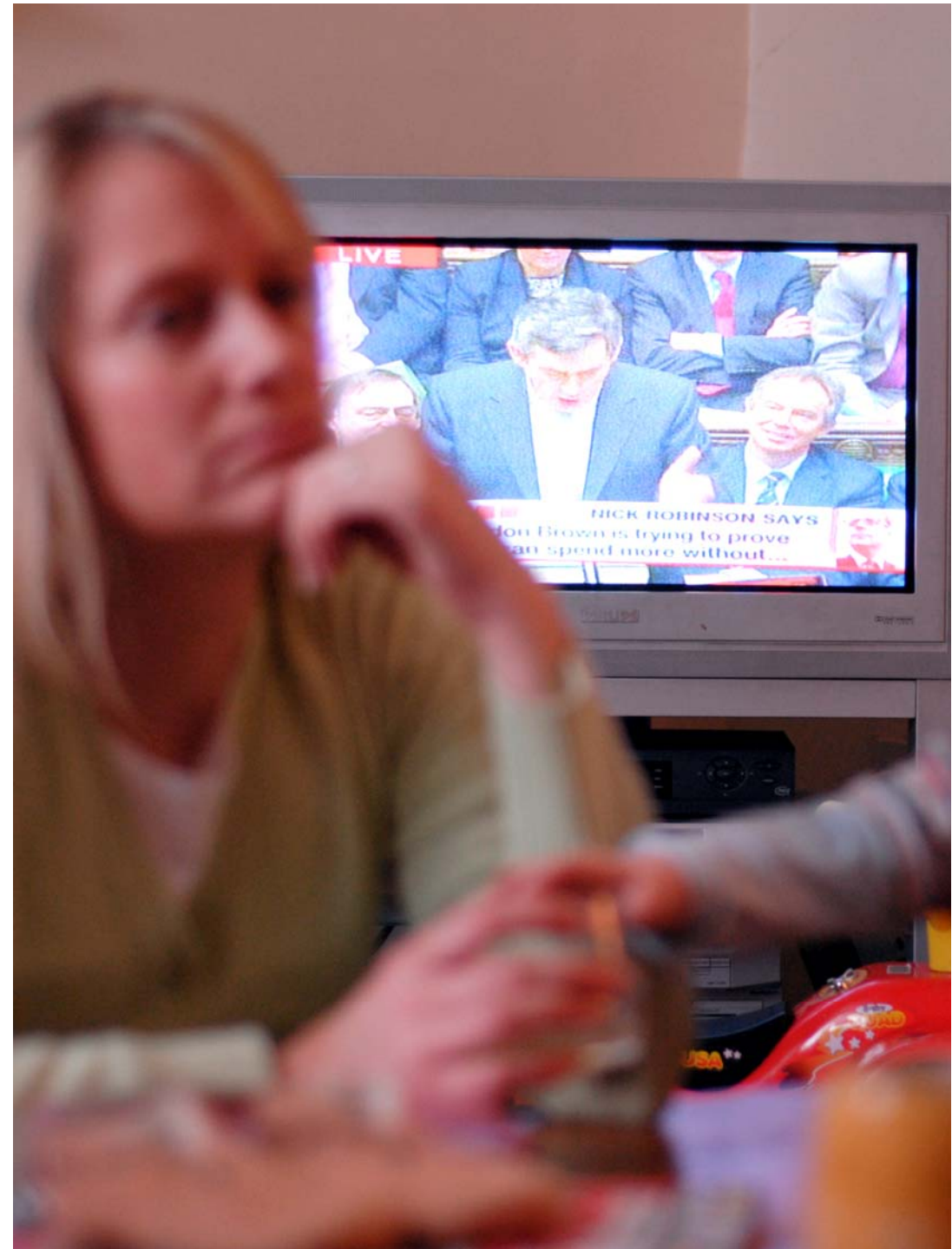
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The public have low expectations of MPs – what they can achieve, their accessibility and their responsiveness. MPs are ‘untouchable’ & ‘hard to reach’ because they are (rightly) at the top of the hierarchy.

‘MPs are a bit untouchable, trying to get through to them would be like battering your head against a wall.’ - Jane



2

The public do not understand what MPs can do for them. When told, they do not believe that it is humanly possible for MPs to do what they do.

‘MPs have too many hats to wear...they come from a different world [...] they got degrees.’ - Glen

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The good news is that when people 'experience' their MP, they respect them.

'I expected to be turned away because I was homeless... he is very compassionate... it wasn't what I expected...I'd like to go back and talk to him...' - Joe

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3 What if?

MPs engaged with their constituents to understand their needs and spot opportunities to make a difference.

Our workshop with young people found it would be better if MPs acted like 'bent cops'- put their ears to the ground and didn't introduce themselves as MPs.

They thought MPs should have a team of assistants/informers who know the area and meet with the MP once a week.

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The MP's assistant (youth)

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What might this mean?

Building a network of 'specials' – constituents (not party activists) as part time paid researchers seeking opportunities and problems.

Going undercover – no party presence, no politician presence.

Holding street events and single issue events instead of surgeries – visible dialogue with groups not individuals.

New ways to let people know when their feedback makes a difference.

Running highly focused local campaigns.



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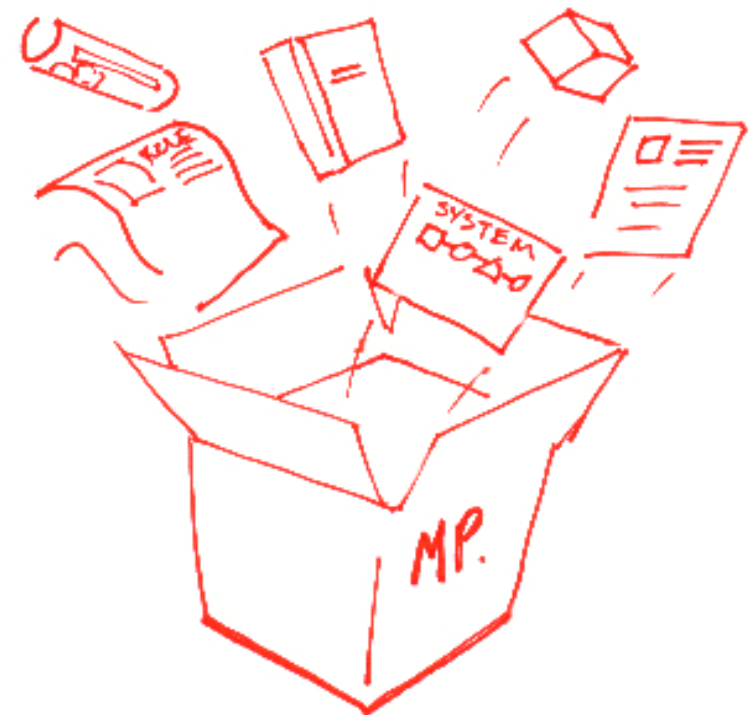
A New Hansard aimed at constituents. A documentary of MPs' work in constituencies that would make use of local news and media channels.

Building new measures of success that replace replies to letters, cases closed, surgery cases processed.

Giving job roles in the constituency to the runners up in an election - as an intermediary between MPs and constituents.

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A listening toolkit for every MP?



RED creates future services with and for the public. RED is a 'do tank' that develops new thinking and practice through design-led innovation. We design new services, systems, and products that address social and economic problems.

For further information on the work of RED please visit www.designcouncil.org.uk/RED

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