

Imagine how powerful our argument becomes if every MP is approached about an issue at the same time and in turn asks the same questions of the government.

*A step-by-step  
guide to  
taking action*

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**aid**

## Lobbying your MP couldn't be easier

### What will I be asked to do?

Three times a year we'll ask you to contact your MP, usually at key campaigning opportunities such as an important international meeting (for example, the G8 or United Nations climate change conference) or when a bill is going through Parliament. Occasionally we'll ask you to contact your MEP or a local company.

### How it works:

1. We'll write to you with all the information you need on the campaign topic as well as a briefing for your MP, explaining the action we would like them to take.
2. We encourage you to arrange a meeting with your MP. If you are unable to meet your MP, you could write to them or call their office instead.

### What happens after I have taken the action?

We'll ask you to tell us about your MP's response – either by email or via a feedback form – and to send us copies of any replies your MP receives from the government. This way we can measure the success of our campaign and record which MPs are particularly interested in global poverty. It will also allow us to follow up on any comments or commitments your MP makes.

**We'll then help you if you'd like to respond to your MP's reply. And of course we'll keep you updated on how the campaign progresses!**

A woman with dark hair and bangs is looking down at her smartphone. She is wearing a bright red t-shirt with white text. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a building and a motorcycle.

*'It's especially important that people continue to lobby parliamentarians on issues like climate change and trade justice. Contact with campaigners reminds us of the needs of the poor and vulnerable.'*

**Susan Kramer, Liberal Democrat  
MP for Richmond Park**

What can  
your MP do?

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## Find out what actions your MP can take to achieve change for the world's poor

**Your MP is there to represent your views, so it is important to let them know about the issues that concern you. Don't forget: without support from their constituents, they wouldn't have been elected in the first place!**

Direct and personal contact with your MP is a very powerful way of campaigning. Contact from a local lobbyist can prompt an MP to become more involved in development issues. Lobbying your MP is one of the best ways to make your voice heard. Remember your MP can contribute to achieving change in government policy.

**Each local lobbyist briefing will include details of an action that we would like you to ask your MP to take. This will often be asking them to write a letter to a government minister, outlining your concerns on an issue and asking for a reply, which your MP should forward to you.**

**We may also ask you to urge your MP to:**

- > sign a parliamentary motion to show their support for a particular issue
- > ask a question in Parliament
- > ask for a debate in Parliament
- > speak at a government debate
- > use their influence on an all-party group or select committee.

MPs can also highlight issues outside Parliament, in talks, interviews or newspaper articles. They may also be able to influence their political party's policy on a particular issue.

**What about devolved government?**

Most issues related to foreign policy and international development are decided in Westminster, but members of devolved governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales can influence local policy on the environment and help raise awareness of wider development issues.

**What about MEPs?**

From time to time it will be useful for local lobbyists to target their MEPs. Your MEP can help raise awareness of issues like trade justice within the European Union.



Know  
your MP

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Has your MP already taken action on issues such as climate change or international development? If they have, mention it when you write to or meet them.

## The more you know about your MP, the better you can pitch your case

Call 020 7219 4272 or go to [www.locata.co.uk/commons](http://www.locata.co.uk/commons) to find out who your MP is.

### Things to look out for:

- > Does your MP hold a position in government or in a shadow cabinet? Is your MP a parliamentary private secretary (PPS)? If so, they may have more influence.
  - > How has your MP voted on certain issues? What debates have they taken part in? Which early day motions (EDMs) have they signed?
  - > Does your MP sit on a House of Commons committee or on an all-party group (environmental, defence and trade committees or groups can be just as relevant as international development ones)?
- > What did they do before becoming an MP?
  - > Does your MP mention being a Christian?
  - > Does your MP have a personal interest in international development – for example, have they lived or worked overseas?
  - > Is your constituency a marginal seat? Your MP will be particularly keen to respond to your concerns if the majority is slim.
  - > Is your MP new to the post or have they represented the constituency for many years?

The following websites have all this information and more:

[www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)  
[www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)  
[www.epolitix.com](http://www.epolitix.com)  
<http://politics.guardian.co.uk>

For information on MEPs, visit: [www.euoparl.org.uk](http://www.euoparl.org.uk)

Many MPs also have their own websites – you can find them through an internet search engine.

**Don't forget: if you need any help or advice, you can always contact Christian Aid's Campaigns team on 020 7523 2225 or [campaigns@christian-aid.org](mailto:campaigns@christian-aid.org)**

Find out from your MP's office  
how best to get in touch.

Contacting  
your MP

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## How to track down your MP and meet them face to face

**MPs are busy people, and they all prefer different methods of contact. Find out from your MP's office how best to get in touch. A secretary or researcher will often be your first point of contact – these are the people who decide which letters need to be seen by an MP and manage their diary, so it's useful to get them on your side!**

### **Meeting your MP in person**

Meeting your MP face to face might feel more daunting than writing a letter but don't worry – we will provide you with all the information you need. And in most cases your MP won't be an expert on the issue.

### **Before the meeting**

The best way to make an impact on your MP is to arrange to meet them at their weekly surgery. Some tips to make sure your meeting goes well:

- > Arrange an appointment with your MP well in advance.
- > Make notes of the key points that you want to raise in advance.
- > Will you recognise your MP? If not, find a photo in the local newspaper or on the internet.
- > Be punctual, but be prepared for the fact that MPs often run late.
- > Ideally, take along a small group of people who share your concerns. This could make more of an impact on your MP. If you do this, make sure you plan in advance who will say what.

### **During the meeting**

- > Keep it short: it's worth asking at the start how much time you have available.
- > Take notes so you can follow up important points.

- > If you're asked a difficult question, don't worry. Offer to find out and come back with the response.
- > Keep the discussion on track! Your MP might change the subject to avoid an issue they prefer not to deal with.
- > Give your MP a copy of the parliamentary briefing that Christian Aid sent you.
- > Make sure you ask your MP to take a specific action. This will be in the briefing.

### **After the meeting**

Follow up with a note to thank your MP. Include a reminder of the key points raised and say that you look forward to hearing from them.

It may be useful to quote something that your MP or their party has said in the past – this can help bring your point home.

Get  
scribbling!

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## Ways to get in touch with your MP

### In writing

**Letters are important and make MPs take notice of an issue. But some MPs receive up to 200 letters a day. Make sure that yours will be noticed by following these tips:**

- > Remember to include your full name and address. That way it is clear that you are one of their constituents, and they know where to send a reply.
- > Use your own words and make it personal – write directly from your own experience, and explain why you feel so strongly about the issue.
- > Keep it short and to the point: one side of A4 should be enough.
- > If you write your letter by hand, make sure it is legible!
- > Stick to one issue per letter.
- > Keep to constructive points, offering solutions rather than just criticism.

- > If possible, it may be useful to quote something that your MP or their party has said in the past – this can help bring your point home.
- > Use bullet points to highlight your arguments clearly.
- > Include supporting facts to back up your case.
- > Be clear about what you want your MP to do.
- > If you print your letter, remember to sign it personally.
- > Ask for a reply.

**You can write to your MP at:  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA**

### By email

Some MPs find email the easiest way to communicate with their constituents. When writing an email, follow most of the rules that apply to writing a letter. Remember to include your full name and address. You can find your MP's email address using the 'Know your MP' card in this pack.

### By telephone

MPs have two offices: one in Westminster for use during the week, and one in their constituency. They tend to be in their constituencies from Friday morning to Monday morning (unless Parliament is in recess). Try calling the constituency office first. The number will be in your local telephone directory. **If you need to call your MP in Westminster, ring the House of Commons switchboard on 020 7219 3000 and ask for your MP's office.**

**Before you call, you may find it helpful to jot down some points that you want to make and remember:**

- > Keep it short and polite.
- > Make sure you explain clearly what you would like your MP to do.
- > If you get through to an answering machine, leave a short message and your name and telephone number.
- > Do not be discouraged if you find it hard to get through. MPs receive hundreds of calls. They are not trying to avoid you!

Never underestimate the importance of the media to your MP: if they are seen to be supporting local events it can help boost their profile in the community.

Events  
and the  
local media

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## Other opportunities to get your MP involved in the issues that count

### Events

**If Christian Aid is holding an event in your local area, invite your MP along. If they see that many people in the area are concerned about issues affecting the developing world, they may be more likely to take action on your behalf. Inviting your MP may also help attract local media coverage.**

**Never underestimate the importance of the local media to an MP: it is a key way for them to maintain profile and boost support.**

### Tips for inviting your MP to an event:

- > Make sure your MP has clear directions to the event, and that they are well briefed about what to do when they get there.

- > Try to get a contact number, and keep in touch in case of delays.
- > Always thank them for coming, and remember to follow up on any of their comments or commitments.
- > Make sure you send press cuttings or newsletters about any local campaigning or events that are relevant to the issues you have discussed to your MP's office.

### Photo calls

If you are arranging a group meeting or handing in a petition to your MP, invite a journalist or photographer from the local media. This will help give the issue a higher profile in your area and may even encourage more people to join Christian Aid's campaigns. And if the press don't turn up, take a photo yourself and

send it to the local paper with an accompanying press release. You will find guidance on writing a press release on Christian Aid's website.

### Elections

In the run-up to general elections or by-elections, both the sitting MP and local candidates from other parties will be keen to respond to your concerns. Hustings, door-to-door canvassing and local campaign events will give you plenty of opportunities to raise your concerns.

**For advice on what question to ask the candidates, contact Christian Aid's Campaigns team on 020 7523 2225 or [campaigns@christian-aid.org](mailto:campaigns@christian-aid.org)**

Jargon  
buster

## All you ever wanted to know about the strange and intricate workings of government

### **All-party parliamentary groups**

There are a number of all-party groups that provide an opportunity for discussion and cooperation on particular issues. Christian Aid often attends APPG meetings; this helps keep Parliament informed about the issues we work on.

### **Parliamentary private secretary**

A parliamentary private secretary (PPS) is an MP who is chosen by a government minister to help them with parliamentary duties.

### **Party whips**

Whips are MPs responsible for ensuring that backbenchers vote in accordance with the party leadership on important issues.

### **Select committees**

A number of MPs sit on a range of cross-party select committees which monitor specific government

departments. They carry out enquiries and report back to Parliament.

### **Adjournment debates**

An adjournment debate is a short, half-hour-long debate that is introduced by an MP in the House of Commons. A weekly ballot is held to determine which MPs get to choose the subject.

### **Bills**

A bill is a proposal for a new piece of legislation that – if approved by a majority in both houses – will become an Act of Parliament and law. There are various stages of a bill during which consultation and amendments can be made.

#### **> Private member's bills**

Individual MPs have the power to introduce their own legislation as a private member's bill. Each year a ballot is held at the start of the session to decide which MPs can introduce legislation on a subject of their choice.

#### **> Ten-minute rule bills**

MPs may also introduce private member's bills in the form of ten-minute rule bills. The sponsoring

MP can make a speech lasting ten minutes in support of their bill. These bills rarely become law, but are used to gain publicity for a particular issue.

### **Early day motion**

An early day motion (EDM) is a kind of petition tabled by a group of MPs calling for a debate on a particular subject. While rarely debated, EDMs allow MPs to canvass how much support there is for an issue.

### **Hustings**

These are public meetings organised around the time of an election, where people can question prospective candidates and politicians.

### **Parliamentary questions**

MPs can table oral or written questions to relevant government departments. In addition, the prime minister answers questions from MPs every Wednesday.

### **The parliamentary year**

Both Houses of Parliament adjourn at Christmas, Easter, Whitsun and during the summer.