

# ENGAGING POLITICAL DECISION MAKERS



## Which type of political decision maker should you engage?

Once you've identified the issue you want to change, think about the structures you need to target to achieve that change:

- Local Government
- Your Member of Parliament (MP)
- National Government

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- For very localised issues seeking the help of your local councillor might be your best option.
- Visit this [UK Government resource](#) to find out which council you live in and which councillor is responsible for your immediate area, normally called a 'ward'.
- Writing to and meeting with a local councillor is much like writing to or visiting an Member of Parliament (MP).

## YOUR MP

- There are 650 Members of Parliament (MP) in the UK. Each MP is responsible for the area that they represent, called a constituency. People who live in an MP's constituency are called constituents.
- It is an MP's job to represent their constituents in the Houses of Parliament. You won't be able to vote if you are under 18 years old, but as a constituent it is still your MP's job to listen to what you have to say and address your concerns. Your age is even likely to be an advantage: MPs are often impressed and inspired when they see young people seeking to make the world a better place.

## Think carefully about what you're asking them to do:

- Politicians like it when you come to them with a clear plan of action for what you would like them to do. It's great to be passionate about an issue, but you need to also have an idea of what the solution to the problem is and how a politician can help you achieve that solution.
- You might want a politician to raise the profile of an issue. They could do this by raising the issue with Government Ministers, speaking in a debate about the issue, or making the media aware that they are concerned.
- You might want a politician to spark change. This could mean actively seeking to change the law, changing their personal views, or their political party's approach to a given issue.

## BEFORE YOU CONTACT YOUR MP:



- [TheyWorkForYou](#) is a useful resource to find out who your MP is and what they are passionate about.
- Visit the website and enter your postcode. You will then be told who your MP is, what party they represent and if they have a special role in government.
- If you scroll down the page it will tell you what their areas of interest are and how they have voted in Parliament recently.
- Think about your issue in relation to their interests; try to present the issue in a way that's going to make them most likely to act. But don't feel disappointed if it doesn't say they're concerned about your issue; it's still their job to listen to your concerns!

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## Contacting your MP:

### STEP 1

**Write a letter or email to your MP** explaining why you are concerned about the issue, what you would like to see them do and request a meeting to discuss the issue. Make it clear that you are their constituent (include your full address) and try to make the issue as local as possible - remember it's an MP's job to listen to and represent the concerns of local people! Also mention your age; as a young person you have a powerful voice!

### STEP 2

MPs' offices are very busy and they receive a lot of emails, calls and letters, so you might have to wait a little while for a response. If you haven't heard back within two weeks, **call their constituency office to follow up with them.**

### STEP 3

**Arrange a time to visit your MP.** Make sure you are well prepared and know about the issue you are campaigning to change. Go into the meeting with a plan for how you want the conversation to go and make sure your plan includes a clear ask of what you want your MP to do.

- **If you're finding it hard to arrange a meeting, check if your MP runs something called a 'surgery'.** This is a time when MPs run drop in sessions for constituents to share their concerns. Phone or email your MP's office to make an appointment for a surgery.
- **Remember, your MP will hold a close relationship with Government Ministers and will be able to take your concerns to them.** You can ask an MP to write directly to a Minister if you decide that's the right next step.

## MINISTERS

- Ministers are members of the government who are responsible for a specific area. For example, one Minister will be responsible for education, one for the environment and so on. If you want to engage a Minister, you will need to find out the name of the Minister that is responsible for the issue you are working on.
- Contacting a Minister is extremely difficult because of how busy they are. If you want to engage a Minister with an issue, you're more likely to be successful if you:
  - **Get in contact with your MP** and ask them to write to the relevant Minister.
  - **Get in contact with Unicef UK** to see if they can support your efforts.

## 3 KEY TIPS FOR SUCCESSFULLY ENGAGING A POLITICIAN:



- **Be polite**  
Remember, even if you disagree with a politician's approach to an issue, it's important to remain calm so you can explain your concerns and ensure your voice is heard.
- **Be clear and concise**  
Always be clear about what you want to achieve and how you would like a specific politician to help you achieve it.
- **MPs pay a lot of attention to local media**  
Look at our [media resource](#) to see how you can raise the profile of an issue in your area.