If you are passionate about a local, national or international issue there are lots of ways you can get your voice heard.

Everybody in the United Kingdom is represented by a Member of Parliament (MP). MPs sit in the House of Commons which, along with the House of Lords and the Monarch, makes up the UK Parliament.
WORKING WITH YOUR MP

The UK Parliament is where laws are made and issues are debated, so if you want to raise the profile of your campaign, or change the law or government policy, speaking to your local MP is a good way to get your voice heard.
GET TO KNOW YOUR MP

MPs represent all the people in their local area, whether they vote for them or not. Your MP can help you with issues for which Parliament or the UK Government is responsible, and you can ask them to get involved in your campaign.

MPs all work differently, and each MP decides the best way to represent their constituents, so it can help to get to know how your MP likes to work and the issues they are interested in.

WHO IS YOUR MP?
To find out who your MP is you can do a postcode search using the ‘Find your MP’ service on Parliament’s website: www.parliament.uk/findyourmp or call the House of Commons Enquiry Service on 0800 112 4272 (Freephone) or 020 7219 4272.

CONTACTING YOUR MP
Many MPs have two offices, one in their constituency and one in the House of Commons. You can find contact details for your MP online, as well as more information about them. This may include details of Government or Opposition posts, membership of select committees and recent parliamentary activity, such as questions they have put to ministers in the Chamber, debate contributions and Early Day Motions they support. www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/

Many MPs are active on social media. You might be able to follow them on Twitter, look at their Facebook page, or visit their website or blog. Following your MP on social media can be a great way to keep up to date with your MP’s work.
MPs who become government ministers continue to work for the people they represent, and you can still contact them about your concerns. However, an MP who is also a minister may not be able to speak out as freely and express their views on specific campaigns.
GET YOUR MP ON BOARD

MPs have many demands on their time, and they have to juggle their roles as lawmakers and constituency representatives. You can help them to help you by being well prepared.

BEFORE CONTACTING YOUR MP, YOU SHOULD:

• have a clear description of what your campaign is trying to achieve

• gather evidence supporting your campaign

• think about how your issue fits with your MP’s policy interests or other concerns in their constituency

• have a clear idea of why you want your MP to be involved

• think about what action you would like them to take – some options are included in this guide
LAUNCHING YOUR CAMPAIGN

Your campaign launch can build local or national interest in the issue that is important to you. You can invite your MP to your launch (or to other events such as public meetings), and it’s best to give them as much notice as possible.

MPs usually work in Parliament on weekdays when the House of Commons is sitting, and in their constituency on weekends, although that varies and depends where their constituency is. During recess, when the House of Commons does not sit (meet), MPs may be working in their constituency all week.

Check calendar.parliament.uk or call the House of Commons Enquiry Service to see what is happening in the House of Commons on the day of your event.
PUTTING QUESTIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT

You can ask your MP to support your campaign by putting questions to the Government.

MPs can submit written questions to each government department, or they can ask oral questions in the House of Commons Chamber. Questions are useful, as they can be used to seek information or press for action.

Think about what sort of question may help you gain support or learn more about the issue or campaign important to you. For example, MPs can ask the Government what it is doing about an issue and what its plans are; or how many people have been affected by a problem, or have been helped by a Government policy. MPs can also use questions as a direct way of urging the Government to take action.

REQUESTING A DEBATE

The House of Commons holds debates on a range of issues. Every debate is attended by a minister from the relevant department who responds on behalf of the Government. Debates provide a useful opportunity for MPs to make a case directly to ministers, who are in a position to take action on matters that are raised.

All debates can be viewed live on parliamentlive.tv and everything that is said in a debate is recorded and published by Hansard, the official written record, at www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/commons

MPs can request debates on local, national and international issues. A group of MPs make up the Backbench Business Committee, which allocates time for debates on issues of interest that have broad cross-party support among MPs.

Many debates that the Backbench Business Committee grants come about through campaigns – for example, on the use of animals in circuses, prisoner voting rights or the Hillsborough disaster. MPs present the Committee with the case for a debate, and if they are successful time is allocated for the debate in either
the main House of Commons Chamber or Westminster Hall, a secondary debating chamber.

Some things to consider when asking MPs to raise debates:

• What is the Government’s view on your issue?

• Is the Government already taking action?

• What do you want the Government to do?

• Do you have any statistics or case studies to back up your case?

• Are your proposals practical?

• Is it possible for the Government to address your request?

EARLY DAY MOTIONS
You can promote your campaign by asking your MP to put forward an Early Day Motion (EDM), which is a formal request for a debate in the House of Commons. Very few EDMs are actually debated, but they are used by MPs to put their views on the record and to monitor support for a particular cause. You can also ask your MP to add their name to another MP’s EDM that is linked to your campaign to show their support. For more information, go to: www.parliament.uk/edm

PUBLIC PETITIONS
You can ask your MP to present a public petition to the House of Commons. Petitions must make a clear request to the House of Commons to take action on an issue. Public petitions can be handwritten or printed out. There is information on Parliament’s website to help you with the layout of public petitions: www.parliament.uk/getinvolved
WHO ELSE CAN HELP?

Your MP should be your first point of contact, but there are other people and organisations who can help with your campaign.

- You can contact any member of the House of Lords to ask them for support for your campaign. Use our website to look for their individual policy interests: [www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/lords](http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/lords)

- If you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, you could get in touch with representatives from your local devolved institution: [www.scottishparliament.uk](http://www.scottishparliament.uk); [www.assemblywales.org](http://www.assemblywales.org); [www.niassembly.gov.uk](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk)

- Your local council may be able to help with local issues and services. Check your library, local council website or offices for names and contact details of your local councillors.

- If you live in London, you could contact your London Assembly Member: [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)

- If your campaign is an EU-wide issue, contact your MEP in the European Parliament: [www.europarl.org.uk](http://www.europarl.org.uk)

CAN I CONTACT OTHER MPS?

You should always contact your local MP first to raise an issue at Parliament. However, if your campaign is of general or national importance, you could contact other MPs who may be interested in supporting you. Find out which MPs have an interest in, or are a party spokesperson for, your issue. It is not a good use of your time to contact every MP about your issue. MPs receive a lot of correspondence from their own constituents which is their priority: mass mailings will not generally get their attention.
OTHER WAYS TO CAMPAIGN IN PARLIAMENT

As well as contacting your MP there are many things you can do to raise the profile of your campaign in Parliament, especially if it is of general or national importance.

E-PETITIONS
You can start or sign an e-petition to press for action from the Government or from Parliament. It’s a good way of building momentum for your campaign. Any e-petition with more than 10,000 signatures automatically receives a response from the Government, and any e-petition with more than 100,000 signatures is considered for debate in the House of Commons. This debate will be attended by the relevant minister. For more information or to start your e-petition, go to petition.parliament.uk
INFLUENCING LEGISLATION

There may be an opportunity to influence legislation relevant to your campaign. You can follow the progress of Bills – proposals for new laws – on Parliament’s website. After an initial debate on a Bill (known as Second Reading) in the House of Commons Chamber, it is usually referred to a Public Bill Committee, a smaller group of MPs, for detailed examination. The committee may invite lobby groups, organisations or members of the public to submit their views.

If there is a select committee inquiry related to your campaign, you can make your submission when there is a call for evidence. If there are no current inquiries related to your campaign, you could contact a member of a relevant select committee and ask whether they might draw it to the committee’s attention. For more information, go to www.parliament.uk/business/committees/inquiries-a-z/current-open-calls-for-evidence

SELECT COMMITTEES

Select committees hold inquiries on specific areas of concern, and have the power to summon and cross-examine Government ministers and officials so that they can find out the facts. When a committee starts a new inquiry, it often invites submissions of written evidence from interested parties. The committee may use this written evidence to help shape its inquiry, and it may influence its choice of witnesses to give oral evidence in later public hearings.

If there is a select committee inquiry related to your campaign, you can make your submission when there is a call for evidence. If there are no current inquiries related to your campaign, you could contact a member of a relevant select committee and ask whether they might draw it to the committee’s attention. For more information, go to www.parliament.uk/about/how/committees/select
ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) are informal cross-party groups. Although they do not have official status in Parliament, they provide a valuable opportunity for MPs and members of the House of Lords to develop their knowledge of particular issues and engage with individuals and organisations outside Parliament who share an interest in those issues.

There are APPGs on many different subjects, and if one matches your cause its members might be interested in helping your campaign. For more information go to: www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/apg

SOCIAL MEDIA

You can use social media to find out what is happening in the House of Commons. The House of Commons and many select committees have accounts on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and online forums. These accounts regularly share ways for you to get involved and get your thoughts and experiences heard, for example, by publicising inquiries, asking for suggestions for inquiries, and running digital debates to feed your comments into debates in Westminster Hall. @UKParliament @HouseofCommons @HouseofLords
WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Contact us if you have a question about the work or membership of the House of Commons.

House of Commons Enquiry Service

✉ hcenquiries@parliament.uk
☎ 0800 112 4272 (Freephone) or 020 7219 4272
📍 House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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