

Contacting MPs and Others.

MPs via surgeries, constituency offices or at House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA. Tel: 0207 219 3000 - the Members' number which put you through to the MP's office). (To find their name, phone the House of Commons Information Office on 020 7219 4272.)

Methods of contacting District and County Councillors, MPs, Peers and MEPs – and their names – can be found on the website www.writetothem.com/

What Goes On In Parliament

The Parliamentary Outreach Service www.parliament.uk/get-involved/ informs about the work of Parliament and how best to engage, encouraging greater engagement from the public by:

Information Offices for the House of Commons and The House of Lords and their staff are a great source of information and answer questions.

House of Commons: Tel: 020 7219 4272, email: hcinfo@parliament.uk

House of Lords: Tel: 0207219 3107, email: hinfo@parliament.uk

You need to know about parliament and know your MP

- Know your MP – find out who at www.findyourmp.parliament.uk
- Use the unofficial website which indicates how your MP has voted: www.theyworkforyou.com
- You can email, telephone or write to MPs or Members of House of Lords using information at www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/ (Remember to include your name and contact details)
- Or use the unofficial website: www.writetothem.com. You find your MP (and all other representatives) through your postcode, and then there is a space for you to write a letter via the website directly.
- Speak to your MP at a local surgery – find details in your local paper or on your MP's website.

Select Committees

Select Committees discuss and scrutinise many issues, and their chairs are powerful as they are elected by the House of Commons. The Home Affairs Select Committee and Public Accounts Committee are interested in poverty issues. They involve party members in the same proportions as elected. They hold inquiries on current issues of concern raised with them

All Party Parliamentary Groups

- Members of all parties join to discuss a particular area of interest from a broad range of subjects. There is a full list of groups on www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/apg
- There are plans to produce a list of MPs classified by interest.

Petitions

- You can submit a public petition to your MP to present formally in the chamber
- There is a guide on the website www.parliament.uk (or ring information offices, details above)

Parliamentary Question or debate – you can

- Request your MP or a peer to ask a question in the chamber or ask a written question
- Ask your MP for an adjournment debate – if successful, a government minister must respond

Amendments – you can

- suggest changes to Bills – contact your MP (or, if the bill is going to the Lords, a peer)

Early Day Motions (EDMs)

EDMs are formal motions submitted for Commons debate; however very few are actually debated.

But what EDMs do is allow MPs to demonstrate support for a cause, or urge a course of action.

While not all MPs like them, some seeing them as a form of 'graffiti', they can be very useful to raise the profile of an issue. You can ask your MP to post one or sign one, and even write it yourself – use conventional wording – and ask a sympathetic MP to take it up

Public Bill Committee – you can

- submit written evidence to any Commons committee looking at a Bill
- ask for your views or those of your organisation to be considered in oral evidence

What your MP can do

- Ask question at Prime Minister's Question time (PMQ) any Wednesday
- Send a written question to a minister
- Support an EDM (you could write it)
- Refer your issue to a select committee
- Enter a ballot for 10 minute rule bill
- Enter a ballot for an adjournment debate
- Take a Petition to the House of Commons

Lobbying and other ways you can have influence

- Know what your local council is responsible for e.g. does it have a Welfare Reform Department responsible for decisions on the benefits cap and the bedroom tax, housing benefit, social fund? If not where are these decisions taken?
- Ask for information from a local authority or any public body under a Freedom of Information (Fol) request (e.g. ask your council how many people have moved because of the bedroom tax)
- Know your local councillors. Do any attend your church? Find out when / where they hold their surgeries. Write to them - www.writetothem.com gives details of councillors if you put in your postcode.
- Media – local papers will publish letters or an article about your issues
- Direct action – join a campaign or a demonstration
- E-petitions – there are many on the internet about poverty e.g. 38 degrees, change.org, avaaz
- Contact MEPs (Members of the European Parliament). Again, find yours at: www.writetothem.com or use the official website: www.europarl.org.uk/en/your_meps.htm

More on Parliament: Work and history of Parliament: www.parliament.uk; Calendar of parliamentary business: www.services.parliament.uk/calendar; Work of committees: www.parliament.uk/business/committees; Bills going through parliament: www.services.parliament.uk/bills; Live coverage of parliament, plus archive: www.parliamentlive.tv; Parliamentary news: www.parliament.uk/news; Parliamentary Outreach (free training sessions, regional events): www.parliament.uk/outreach; Find your MP: www.findyourmp.parliament.uk;

More on Local Government: Functions of local government: www.goodgovernance.org

Lots more on the EU: www.europa.eu