

Engaging with your MP or MS online



Contacting your elected representatives is a great way to help them understand more about homelessness, to ask for their support to help end homelessness or to ask them to take action as part of a Crisis campaign.



In Wales, you may want to contact your Member of the Senedd (MS) and/or Member of the UK Parliament (MP). Your elected representatives want to know what it is you care about. Not only do they want to hear from you, they also have a duty to listen; their job is to represent you.

Writing to or setting up a meeting with your elected representative is the most effective way to make an impression on them and make sure they know that you want them to take action to end homelessness.

However, it can often be useful (and quicker!) to engage with your elected representatives online. This guide will help you do this most effectively.

Benefits of engaging with your elected representative online

Many elected representatives regularly use Twitter and other social media sites.

- You may find you're able to get a quicker answer to a question or concern online, rather than sending them an email or a letter.
- Their reply to you may be publicly viewable, so you can share it with others
- They may share your local campaign or concern with their followers
- You can publicly hold them to account on their commitment to ending homelessness

How to contact your elected representative on social media

Many elected representatives use social media, especially Twitter.

You can often find MS' social media handles on their Senedd profiles: **senedd.wales/find-a-member-of-the-senedd** or by doing a quick Google search of their name.



Westminster MPs' Twitter handles are listed on the UK parliamentary website: members.parliament.uk/members/Commons

Who to contact

It's best to contact your MS on issues that relate to housing and homelessness as the Senedd has control over these issues. For issues to do with welfare, the economy or immigration, it's best to contact your MP as Westminster makes decisions in this area. But don't worry – you can contact either and they should either offer help or direct you to the best contact.

What can you ask your representative to do online?

- Ask them to show their support for your local campaign to end homelessness
- Ask them to support one of Crisis' campaigns
- Invite them to visit your local campaign or attend a day of action
- To share your story of homelessness, if you feel comfortable doing so
- To show them you want them to take action to end homelessness
- To ask them to support a petition or other online action

It's worth noting that some elected representatives have a policy of not replying to constituents on social media or won't accept casework enquiries. It's best to check their social media bio.

Top tips for contacting your representative online

Share a story

MPs and MSs love to hear personal stories. Sharing your story, if you have

been affected by homelessness or a related issue can be hugely powerful in convincing your representative to do something. However, remember that social media is a public platform, so you should only post something online if you're comfortable with anyone seeing it, including family and friends, or work colleagues. And make sure you don't share someone else's story without their permission.

Be direct and have a clear ask

Make sure you have a clear thing for your MP or MSs to do. For example, you could ask them to back a national rollout of Housing First, or publicly declare their support for ending homelessness. This is especially important online.

Don't worry if you're not an expert

It's your elected representatives' job to hear from you, and you probably know more about the issue than they do! Just be passionate.

Use a photo

Using a photo on social media can help grab your elected representative's attention and make your message more personal. But again, remember that social media is a public platform, so don't share anything you wouldn't want your friends and family to see, and don't share an image of someone else without their permission.

Be polite

Engaging with your elected representative politely gives you the best chance of them taking notice of your message. Like the rest of us, they have a right to not be abused or subject to harassment as they do their job.



Be sure to tag us!



Twitter: **@Crisis_UK** and **@crisiswales**



Instagram: **@crisis_uk**



Facebook **@crisis.homeless**

What if they don't reply?

Some elected representatives may not reply directly to messages on social media – but that doesn't mean they don't have an effect. We know it may feel frustrating and disheartening if your representative doesn't seem to listen or simply doesn't respond to you at all.

But it's important that constituents continue to make their concerns known to their representatives about issues they care strongly about. They are publicly elected, and are obligated to listen to you, and respond to your concerns.

Showing other people online that you want your representative to take action to end homelessness may motivate others to do the same as they may feel encouraged or that they're not alone in caring about this issue. ■