

How to meet your MP or MSP



Why meet with your MP or MSP?

Your MP and MSP are elected to represent your views and concerns. Meeting with your MP or MSP is one of the most effective ways to increase their knowledge of homelessness and to persuade them to support Crisis campaigns to help us end homelessness for good. It's also a great way to start to build a relationship.

Should I meet my MSP or MP?

It's best to contact your MSP on issues that relate to housing and homelessness as the Scottish Parliament 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.

5 easy steps

1. Find your MP and how to contact them by typing your postcode into members.parliament.uk/members/Commons and/or **find your MSP** and how to contact them by typing your postcode into parliament.scot/msps

2. Contact your MP or MSP's office to arrange an appointment or go to their drop-in surgery. You may also be able to request an online meeting. Drop-in surgeries are opportunities for constituents to discuss their concerns. They are advertised on elected representative's websites, in local papers and in libraries.

Please let the Campaigns Team know your meeting arrangements by emailing campaigns@crisis.org.uk. We can help you to prepare and knowing that a meeting has taken place is very important for informing future contact with your representatives.

3. Prepare key points on what you are going to say with clear suggested actions you are hoping they will take after you meet them. You could ask them to:

- Speak about homelessness in Parliament
- Submit written questions





- Table a debate on homelessness or any related concerns you have
- Write to the Minister with responsibilities for homelessness, on your behalf
- Write to your Local Authority's Chief Executive on your behalf
- Participate in campaign events in Parliament hosted by Crisis

Read more about our key messages and current campaigns to help you prepare **here**. If you're looking for information about homelessness in your specific area, our Research Team may be able to help. Email them at research@crisis.org.uk

During the meeting, stay focused on your key points and share your experience

You may not have long to share your message so do your best to stay focused on your key message.

If you have personally experienced homelessness that gives you knowledge and expertise that your MP/MSP is quite unlikely to have themselves. If you feel comfortable with sharing some of what you have experienced, it can make a big impact on how an MP/MSP acts. If you have not been homeless yourself, here are a few questions you can ask yourself:

- **Do you have any friends or family who have been homeless?**
This might include less well-known forms of homelessness, such as time spent sofa-surfing, sleeping at a friend's house for lack of other options, or sleeping in an unsafe situation, such as in a car.
- **How do you tend to feel when you see someone who is sleeping rough?**
What would help you to feel better about the situation? For example, if you

feel like something should be done, but it's not being done, what practical solution comes to mind.

- **Have you noticed many homeless people in your local area?**

If so, has this number increased lately? How are these people treated? Have you witnessed anything that someone in authority should know about? Have you yourself interacted with someone and gained first-hand knowledge of the challenges they experience that way?

At the end of the meeting, thank them for their time and confirm and write down any agreed action points.

4. After the meeting, send a follow up email

thanking them for their time and sharing any notes and actions. Next, think of ways to keep your campaigning in their minds. Send updates of your successes and any local developments. Keep an eye on their social media channels and look for opportunities to thank them or raise an issue again.

Top Tips

- Don't worry if you're not an expert. You probably know more about the issue than they do – especially if you have been personally affected by homelessness. Don't worry if you're asked a question you can't answer, simply tell them you will be back in touch after the meeting to let them know. We can help you.
- With your elected representative's permission, post about the meeting on social media, ideally alongside a photo. This may motivate others to meet with their MP or MSP on this issue too. Don't forget to share it with us. ■



Template meeting request email to send to your MP or MSP

Subject: Meeting request to discuss ending homelessness

Dear X

I am writing as one of your constituents to request a meeting to discuss ending homelessness and the challenges people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness face when trying to access vital support. [If relevant, include any local issues of concern that affect people experiencing homelessness face.]

I hope you'll agree that, in 21st century Britain, everybody should have a place to live.

People lose their homes for a variety of reasons. Rising pressure from high rents and low pay, or a sudden life event like losing a job or family breakdown, can quickly force people into homelessness – in some cases, for years. But it doesn't need to be like this.

We can end homelessness for good.

[Add a sentence about your personal experience of homelessness and/or your role as a volunteer/supporter for Crisis.]

I would very much welcome a meeting with you to discuss these issues further. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Best wishes,

Name

Address