

# 5 Top Tips for writing to your MP or MSP



As a constituent, your views and interests are a priority to your Member of Parliament and Member of the Scottish Parliament.

Writing to the people elected to represent you is an important way to ensure that they are aware of your concerns and take action to end homelessness for good. You can do this by email or by letter. Writing to your MP or MSP is a great place to start in order to build a relationship with them.

## Should I contact 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.



Here are our 5 Top Tips:

## 1. Use the right address

All MPs and MSPs have email addresses, which you can use to get in touch.

Find out your MP's email address here: [members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP](https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP)

Find out your MSP's email address here: [parliament.scot/msps/current-and-previous-msps](https://parliament.scot/msps/current-and-previous-msps)

If you would prefer to write a letter, you'll find the right postal address using the websites above. Most MSPs and MPs have two offices – one in the constituency and their Parliamentary office. You can write to them at either address. You can also drop a letter into your elected representative's constituency office by hand.

(If you want to know the rules around titles, check the end of this document for a quick guide!)

## 2. Keep it simple

When writing to or emailing your MSP or MP, it's best to be as brief, succinct and clear as possible. An introduction outlining why ending homelessness is important to you, a bit on the impact it has, with a final note on what you want them to do is ideal.





Avoid using technical terminology as much as possible. For an MP or MSP, no more than 3-4 paragraphs is best. As they do have a high volume of correspondence, it's good to be as clear and concise as possible.

Before you write your letter, it's a good idea to have a look at the MP or MSP's website if they have one, or their voting record in parliament. You may be able to reference some of the issues they're interested in, or a particular time they supported efforts to end homelessness. Mentioning something they're interested in or have done in the past can help your letter to stand out and make them more likely to take action.

### 3. Tell a personal story

If you have personally experienced homelessness, in any form, that gives you knowledge and expertise that they are quite unlikely to have themselves. If you feel comfortable with sharing some of what you experienced in that time, it can make a big impact.

That isn't the only way to talk about the issue from a personal perspective though. If you have not been homeless yourself, here are a few questions you can ask yourself too:

- **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?

### 4. Use good information to support your email or letter

MPs and MSPs are strongly motivated by issues of concern to their constituency and to their constituents, but they have a huge number of issues to think about on a day-to-day basis. They may also carry their own personal biases. As a constituent you can play an important role in shaping their views and teaching them more about the issue of homelessness.

Crisis has a wealth of resources available online on a lot of subjects related to homelessness beyond what we campaign on, and you can find lots of briefings and reports by subject here:

**[crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/latest-briefings-and-responses/](https://crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/latest-briefings-and-responses/)**

When writing a letter as a constituent, it's also a good idea to talk about your local area, as that is where your elected representative's main interests lie.



### 5. Have a clear action for your MP or MSP to take

It's great to use your email or letter to raise awareness of the issue of homelessness, but it's always best to use it as an opportunity to tell your MP or MSP exactly what it is you want them to do.

There are lots of ways they can make an impact, so you can 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

If you don't want to meet your MP or MSP personally, you can also ask them to get in touch with Crisis ([campaigns@crisis.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@crisis.org.uk)) and we'll be happy to talk to them directly. ■

### Titles

As a rule of thumb, 'Rt Hon.' (short for Right Honourable) is only used if your MP is a Secretary of State, or has previously been one (once given the title, they keep it forever, even if they return to the backbenches). Otherwise, you usually don't need to do anything except add 'MP' to the end of their name when writing to them.

There are a few exceptions; for example, if the MP has received an Honour from the Queen they may use the title of 'Sir' or 'Dame'. MPs who have a parent who has served or who is serving in the House of Lords are also able to use the title 'The Hon.' (short for The Honourable), but are unlikely to expect you to know that! If you're not sure, it is usually best to check online.

For MSPs, it's a little more straightforward. MSPs are simply addressed as Name MSP, e.g. Humza Yousaf MSP.