

How to write an influential letter to your MP.



There are many creative ways to influence politicians but a well-written, personal letter can make all the difference. Formal correspondence is still a major part of parliamentary life. MPs tell us that just 20 personally-written letters from constituents can make an issue a priority for them.

So what are the rules to writing an influential letter?

1. Always include your name and address so your MP can check that you are a constituent.
2. Keep it short – letters should be kept to one side of A4.
3. Start on a positive note whenever possible and give credit where it's due.
4. Make your letter personal. Pro-forma letters are good for showing wide constituency support for an issue, but they don't have the same impact as a handful of personal, tailored letters. MPs will also be less inclined to send you a standard letter back, making it more likely they will carefully consider the points you raise.
5. If you already know your MP, you may like to start by briefly mentioning your last meeting with them or something they have recently said or done.
6. Get straight to the point and stick to two or three key messages. If MPs require further details, their staff can usually look these up for them.
7. Be clear in the letter about the "asks" – what do you want your MP to do?
8. Write in clear, simple language, making each of your points as succinctly as possible. Avoid jargon.

9. You may want to include relevant background briefings alongside your letter. Oxfam can often help to supply this information.
10. Finally, check for accuracy – especially correct spelling of names, titles and contact details. Misspelling your MP's name can get you off on the wrong foot.

Remember, you don't have to be a political expert. Your passion is your biggest asset and shows your MP what 'the people' think. This should make your MP sit up and listen.