



# MP Engagement pack

## A Time for Hope

As part of our Lent campaign this Jubilee year: A Time for Hope, we are encouraging our Mini Vinnies, Youth SVP and Young Adult groups to write a letter to their MP to raise their voices regarding the policy on the number of days refugees have to find permanent accommodation before the government support is stopped. It is also a great opportunity for our young Vincentians to invite their local MP to come and visit their schools and projects and learn about the amazing work they are doing to turn concern into action.

This guide is here to help you arrange a successful visit from your local MP and contains practical guidance and information on how to meet with MPs and ideas on what to ask them.

If you have any questions, please let us know, we are here to help you.

### Who is an MP?

The MP stands for Member of Parliament. This is easy to remember because it's the reverse of PM (Prime Minister). Parliament itself is comprised of three elements:

- The House of Commons
- The House of Lords
- The Monarch

An MP is a member of the House of Commons. Each MP has a constituency (or area) they work for. Each MP is voted by people who live in that area, and it's the job of that MP to represent their community and do their best to make sure people in that community can thrive. There are currently 650 MPs in the House of Commons who belong to different political parties.

### Why is it important to talk to your MP?

Lots of things that can affect us all are discussed and decided in UK Parliament. And while it's the Government's job to run the country, its Parliament's job to check and challenge what the Government does. The job of MPs is to vote on new laws, debate issues from homelessness and poverty, to trains and schools. Because the UK is a democracy, we all have a right to have a say in how the country is run. One way of doing this and making sure your voice is heard is to talk to your MP.

### How to find your MP

You can easily find your MP by using your postcode to search on the following website:

<https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP>

Your postcode will allow the website to determine what constituency you live in and which MP you have. An MP's details may also be published in your local newspaper or public library.

## **How to contact your MP**

The FindYourMP website will provide the name of your MP and their contact details, such as a phone number for their office, constituency address and their email address. It should also provide details of how the MP prefers to be addressed e.g. "Mrs Sherryl Murray" should be addressed as "Mrs Sherryl Murray" or "Sir Stephen Timms" should be addressed as "Sir Stephen Timms MP".

Once you found their details you can email them and invite them to visit your school Alternatively, you can book a meeting with your MP by either writing to them a letter or calling the MP's office and asking if you can make an appointment.

It is a good idea to offer potential dates that the MP could come or ask them which days might suit them so they can come back with preferred options. It is also sensible to provide a short summary of what you will be presenting/showing to them.

## **Email/letter template for your MP**

You can use the template provided by the SVP Membership Services Team to email or write a letter to your MP.

**\*\*Don't worry if it takes some time for the MP to reply to you, that is normal as they have very busy jobs. The MP will hopefully reply to you within 3-4 weeks of your message, and they will let you know whether they have accepted your invitation to visit your school.**

## **Three top tips for engaging with your MP and having a successful visit**

Congratulations! Your MP has replied yes to your invitation, and you have arranged a date and time for them to visit your school. Now it's time to prepare for the visit. Here are our top three tips to make sure you can arrange a successful visit.

Don't forget we are here to help you! If you have any questions, let us know. We can even help you on the day to have a mock meeting with the MP, or offer advice over a Zoom call.

- **Research**

Find out what issues your MP cares about and whether they have taken an active interest in poverty or other issues. You can find this information by researching which groups they are part of within Parliament and looking at their voting record or what issues they have spoken about regularly, [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com) is a website which features a lot of this information.

- **Plan!**

Before the day try to have a structure of what you would like to happen and what you would like to say. It can be helpful to have a summary of the key points that you would like to make in case your mind goes blank on the day, or the conversation goes off in an unintended direction. If more than one person is showing them around and meeting with the MP, try to agree in advance who will say/do what. You might like to include some time to show them Tariku's story as a foundation for your questions regarding this policy.

- Don't be scared!

Don't forget... politicians work for you!! They are normal people just like all of us. Their job is to help make the country a little better, and they can only do this job if they talk and listen to people and children like you.

## **On the day**

- **Welcome them and show them around**

A typical meeting could involve you meeting the MP on arrival to the school reception and welcoming them to the school, perhaps accompanied by a teacher or the head of your Young Vincentians group.

- **Tell them a little about the SVP**

They may not know who the SVP is and what we do, so give them some information.

For example you can say:

"The St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) works in communities across England and Wales, offering support to people facing poverty in all its forms.

During 2023/24, St Vincent's centres distributed over 140,000 hot meals and food parcels. We also provide a wide variety of support, including activities for older people, people with dementia and their carers, opportunities for younger people, training courses, debt advice, help for refugees and asylum seekers, and much, much more. We have many community shops and projects to help people who just came out of prison or who don't have a family or friend to help them.

Our mission is to turn concern into action and in doing so provide practical support delivered with kindness and compassion, empowering those in need to live a fuller life with dignity."

- **Talk about what your group does and tell them why it's important to you!**

Once you've shown them around it's time to tell them about what your group does and why it is important to you. This can also be done over a cup of tea which you can choose to offer to them after you have looked around. Talk about what you do in your Mini Vinnies/ Youth SVP/ Young Adults group e.g. describe the community outreach or projects that you do such as visiting the elderly or collecting items for a foodbank. They may ask you questions about your group and what you have been doing. There is nothing to be worried about, just talk about your work, whether that's collecting food for the local food bank, writing cards for older people, collecting money for refugees. The MP will be interested in hearing from you and learn about what you are passionate about. This would be a great opportunity to share with the MP what you are doing to bring hope to others this year.

- **Now is your opportunity to ask them questions!**

The visit is a great opportunity to ask them questions which might relate to the issues your group try to tackle. For our Time for Hope campaign, questions around asylum seekers and refugees and this policy would be ideal. Some examples of the questions you can ask them are:

- What are the things you are doing within parliament to try and tackle poverty?
- What is the government doing to make sure that refugees have enough time and help to feel safe and settle into their new homes?
- How is the government making sure that refugees feel welcome?
- Will you ask a question in Parliament for us?
- What is your favourite thing about being a politician?

- **Take a photo with them**

On the day you can also take photos of the visit (but make sure you ask for their permission first) and make sure to send them back to the SVP Membership Services Team at [youngvincentians@svp.org.uk](mailto:youngvincentians@svp.org.uk), along with photo consent forms for all those featured in the photo. This is a great opportunity to share the work our amazing young Vincentians do around the country.

- **Let's help them learn more about the SVP**

When you have confirmation of an MP's visit, let us know, and we will send you some copies of our most recent report [Stories from the frontline](#).

## **Afterwards**

- Well done!

You should be really proud of yourself, meeting and MP is a great opportunity to make your voice heard and put your concern and faith into action.

- Tell us about your visit

We would love to show other Young Vincentian groups about all the MP visits that have taken place. Together we can join our voices together and really make a difference. Tag us in your social media posts using [#SVPDoorsofHope](#)



# Plan for MP's visit

## Arrival time of your MP:

## Welcome chat with Headteacher (10 minutes)

## Tour of the school to be led by:

(10–15 minutes)

## Sit down, cuppa and Q&A with children (20 minutes)

Location

## Share about the SVP, your good news stories and what you've learnt through the SVP campaign: A Time for Hope:

## Questions to ask our MP

- What are the things you are doing within parliament to try and tackle poverty?
- What is the government doing to make sure that refugees have enough time and help to feel safe and settle into their new homes?
- How is the government making sure that refugees feel welcome?
- Will you ask a question in Parliament for us?
- What is your favourite thing about being a politician?

### Other questions:

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