

# IJM ADVOCACY CHAMPIONS

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'HOW TO' GUIDES



IJM



**WE'RE SO EXCITED TO HAVE YOU ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE  
ALONGSIDE IJM.** We hope that you find this 'how to' guide helpful  
when addressing your local MP, companies or brand owners to  
respond to the violence we see in the world today.

We would love to continue to support you in your journey as an IJM  
Advocacy Champion. If you have any questions, or receive responses  
from MPs or brands you'd like to share with us, then please get in  
touch: [champions@IJMUK.org](mailto:champions@IJMUK.org) or 0203 405 9080.

**Thank you for your ongoing support in advocating for meaningful  
and lasting change #UntilAllAreFree.**

# HOW TO: WRITE TO YOUR MP

**MPs have a responsibility to listen to their constituents and understand the issues which are important to them.** Only by doing so can MPs truly represent them in Parliament. Proactively contacting your MP about an issue makes it more likely that they will make it a priority, using their platform to speak out about a topic and to ask questions of the Government.

From time to time, IJM will ask you to contact your MP about a specific issue, such as the launch of a new report or if we are hosting an event. However, we also invite you to write to your MP separately using this guide and factsheet so that they understand your passion to see the end of violence and exploitation.

This guide focuses primarily on issues of modern slavery, but we would be delighted for you to also contact your representative about other forms of abuse which IJM works to address, such as sexual violence against children or intimate partner violence.

We have also focused on writing to your MP at Westminster, as the UK Government has greater influence over many of these issues. If you are based in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales you may also want to write to your representatives in the devolved administrations and we would be happy to discuss this with you.

You can find out who your MP is at <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/>

## HOW DO I STRUCTURE MY LETTER OR EMAIL?

### 1. INTRODUCE YOURSELF

- Include the name of your constituency and your address/postcode. MPs have a duty to respond to their constituents, so this will increase the probability of a quick response. You might want to put your postcode in the email subject line for clarity.

### 2. EXPLAIN WHY YOU ARE WRITING THE LETTER/EMAIL

- Remind them of the scale of the problem (e.g. there are approximately 40 million people in modern slavery today).
- Use statistics or evidence if possible; you might want to refer to the factsheet for details.
- Mention why you personally care about the issue.
- If you know about anything your MP has said or done in the past to do with the issue, you could thank them for this. If you have time you could check [They Work For You](#) to search their name and the issue, e.g. 'modern slavery' or 'human trafficking.'

### 3. OUTLINE A SPECIFIC CALL TO ACTION

- What can they personally do now to address the problem or contribute to wider, sustainable change?
- Often the most straightforward 'ask' is for them to ask a question of the Government. You might ask them to write directly to the relevant departmental minister (likely to be in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office). You might also ask them to raise it as a question 'in the Chamber' (e.g. at Prime Minister's Questions, or the departmental question time).
- If you want to do more research, you might consider upcoming votes or bills in which they could raise the issue, or if they are a member of a relevant select committee which could closely examine the problem.

**Please Note:** IJM will send you an update with specific calls to action, so no need to feel pressure to keep up with everything going on in politics!

### 4. A FINAL WORD OF THANKS

- For taking the time to read your letter/email.
- Note that you are looking forward to receiving their response.

### TOP TIPS FOR YOUR LETTER OR EMAIL

1. Don't worry if you don't get an instant response. If you send in email form, you will most often receive an automated response confirming receipt. The actual response could take up to three weeks.
2. It is better to keep your email short and sweet - one side of A4 if possible. This indicates you have clearly recognised an issue and provided succinct action points, increasing the clarity of your letter.
3. Be original. If it seems that a constituent has used a template word for word, the MP may not feel that the letter is representative of a wide base of constituents' attitudes, since sending it has been a time free exercise. It is easier for MPs to send out a blanket response and not engage with the issue if they have seen the letter numerous times before.
4. Formalities. Addressing your MP correctly enables the letter to start with a positive tone. You can use the [House of Commons website](#) to identify their title and email address.
5. If you are a student, you can write to two MPs - one with your university address and one with your permanent address.
6. At IJM, we would recommend using a positive tone in your email. Although it can be tempting to express frustration or anger that violence and exploitation persist today, it is essential to adopt a constructive tone. IJM seeks to be a critical friend to those who hold the power and influence to bring about meaningful protection for the most vulnerable in society.
7. Remember, you don't need to be an expert in politics to write to your MP. It is far more important for your MP to see how a member of their constituency thinks.

# HOW TO: TWEET YOUR MP

Twitter can be a good mechanism for publicly asking your MP a question about a **single issue**. If you have multiple issues that you want to address, it might be better to write an email or letter.

## 1. IF YOU ARE ONE OF THEIR CONSTITUENTS, MENTION IT IN THE TWEET

For example, 'Good morning @(Twitter handle), I'm one of your constituents...'

Although most of the time it is better to contact your own MP, if another MP raises the issue of modern slavery, perhaps in the media or in Parliament during Prime Minister's Questions, then you might consider tweeting them to say thank you.

## 2. STATE THE PROBLEM

Make this concise: aim for one sentence. Ensure that the tweet addresses a single issue.

## 3. CALL TO ACTION

Be specific and ensure that it is something that they can feasibly do in the near future.

- Could they ask a question of, or write to the relevant departmental minister? See guidance above regarding email/letter-writing.

**Please Note:** IJM will send you an update with specific calls to action, so again no need to feel pressure to keep up with everything going on in politics!

## 4. USING HASHTAGS

This is helpful as it shows the MP that there is already interest in the issue, for instance if you use a hashtag that is already trending.

## 5. TONE IS IMPORTANT

IJM has found that being polite and constructive is more likely to lead to the MP taking notice and action.

# HOW TO: WRITE TO A BRAND

**Brands care about what their consumers think. Businesses will act when they understand that their consumers are concerned about an issue.** Change is beginning to happen as regards environmental impact in part because consumers let businesses know that they care, and they don't want their goods to cause further harm to the planet.

The Modern Slavery Act requires large businesses to publish a statement on their website about the steps they have taken to identify and mitigate risks of slavery in their supply chains. Such transparency is really important, but more action is needed to bring about meaningful change. Writing to brands and business is a great way to let them know that you are concerned about the welfare of the workers throughout their supply chains who produce our food and drink, the clothes we wear, the phones we use.

To magnify the impact of writing, you might also want to consider how you can make a difference with your choices as a consumer. See [IJMUK.org/SlaveFree](http://IJMUK.org/SlaveFree) for ideas.

## HOW DO I STRUCTURE MY LETTER OR EMAIL?

### 1. INTRODUCE YOURSELF

- If you buy their products, say that you are one of their customers.
- You could say how long you have been buying their products.

### 2. WHAT IS YOUR CONCERN?

- Explain that you are aware of the problem of modern slavery within many company supply chains. You may want to draw detail about the scale of the issue of modern slavery from the factsheet.
- Explain why it is important to you that the business takes action to mitigate the risk of slavery in its supply chains.
- In IJM's experience, you're more likely to get a positive response if you refrain from being accusatory: if you cite reports that have been made surrounding the issue, and acknowledge that this does not necessarily amount to conclusive proof, it gives the brand a chance to respond.

### 3. CALL TO ACTION

- Large businesses are required to publish a statement on their website about the action taken to identify and address exploitation in their supply chains. We would recommend checking their statement and thinking what could be better. Is it thorough? Does it answer your questions? Does it identify specific countries or regions of risk relating to particular products?

- You could ask for greater transparency if the brand has not disclosed sufficient information about its supply chains.
- Asking for public disclosure increases the transparency of a brand. Transparency enables accountability. Transparency is a mechanism of change, not the final goal. It is the first step towards revealing the inadequacies of working conditions and wages, increasing pressure to change practices and reduce exploitation of vulnerable people in supply chains.

#### **EXAMPLES OF THINGS FOR WHICH YOU COULD ASK:**

- Disclosure of all production units and processing facilities.
  - » Brands are responsible for all workers in their supply chain, not limited to their direct employees.
- Disclosure surrounding wages in all production units.
  - » With the aim of guarding against poverty pay and dismantling of trade unions.
- Disclosure surrounding worker safety and general working conditions.
  - » With the aim of revealing any unsafe buildings, ventilation issues, repetitive working habits that could cause strain and inadequate drinking water provision.
- Research any pledges that the company has previously made and ask for evidence that this pledge has been achieved. If they are still on their way to achieving this, ask for their strategy going forward to check for substance behind the pledge.
- Dig deeper into brands statements of intent or environmental policy to ensure these are not empty words.
  - » Read through their website in order to spot any 'information dumping.' This refers to lots of web pages titled differently with no substantive difference and fluffy, obscuring data.

#### **4. A FINAL WORD OF THANKS**

- For taking the time to read your email/letter.
- Note that you are looking forward to receiving their response.



# HOW TO: TWEET A BRAND

**Tweeting is a good way to raise an issue or hop onto a trending issue in the public domain that can easily be retweeted to gain even more exposure.** This can have the effect of widening the base of consumers calling for transparency, further deepening the level of accountability to which the brand can be held.

## **1. WHAT IS YOUR CONCERN?**

Keep this concise and ensure you mention only one concern per tweet. If you wish to raise multiple issues, consider writing a letter.

## **2. CALL FOR GREATER TRANSPARENCY SURROUNDING THAT PARTICULAR ISSUE**

What information are you looking to be published in order to hold the brand accountable?

## **3. USE OF HASHTAGS**

Research trending hashtags in order to increase the public exposure and reach of your tweet.





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**INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION** is a global organisation that protects people in poverty from violence. IJM partners with local authorities in 21 programme offices in 13 countries to combat slavery, violence against women and children, and other forms of abuse against people in poverty. IJM works to rescue and restore victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and help strengthen public justice systems.

Highlighted as one of 10 non-profits "making a difference" by U.S. News and World Report, IJM's innovative work has been featured by the *BBC*, *The Guardian*, *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, *Forbes*, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *The Today Show*, *National Public Radio*, *CNN* and many other outlets.

\*To protect IJM survivors, we have obscured some images and included photos that do not depict actual victims where appropriate. Consent gathered for all images