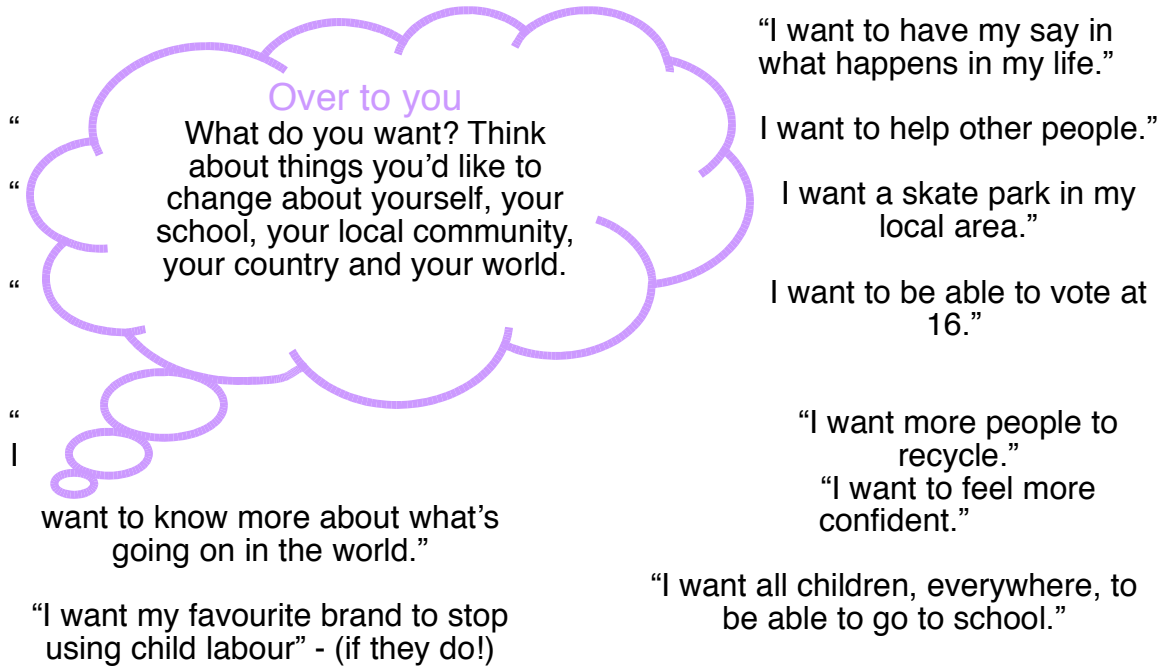


# TAKING ACTION



**Over to you**  
What do you want? Think about things you'd like to change about yourself, your school, your local community, your country and your world.

“I want to have my say in what happens in my life.”

I want to help other people.”

I want a skate park in my local area.”

I want to be able to vote at 16.”

“I want more people to recycle.”

“I want to feel more confident.”

“I want all children, everywhere, to be able to go to school.”

I want to know more about what's going on in the world.”

“I want my favourite brand to stop using child labour” - (if they do!)

## Over to you!

We all have things we want to change but instead of just moaning about them or feeling frustrated....do something about it. It's your world; you can control what happens in it.

Choose what you want to change....pick something you feel strongly about, it's the best motivation!

## Investigate!

Find out more about what needs to happen to make the change.

### Who else wants this change?

There are loads of people out there working to change the world for the better. Thousands of charities work to improve everything from education, to poverty, to the environment, to getting more people involved in working to change things! Most of these charities have a web site, look at the links in this booklet or type your topic into a search engine.

Many charities have been around for decades, so they have spent ages researching and learning about the issues they work on. Use them - they can help you answer questions like the ones below, so that you'll have the information you need to begin to make a change.

### Who has the power to make this change?

## WHAT IS A CHARITY?

An organisation which works to improve the community, locally or globally, in any and every way you can think of. Some charities work on only one issue (Save the Tiger Fund.org) or many similar ones (Greenpeace). It has to raise money to do its work, but it does not make a profit. If it has extra money, it finds other ways to spend it on the people it helps.

Is it your head teacher, your local council, your government or even the UN? Or maybe it's you! If it's a big organisation, like the government, which individual is it best to ask?

### Top Tip

If possible it's best to ask an elected politician who represents you (i.e. your MP). Even if you are too young to vote, they still have to listen to your ideas. Putting your views across is their job – if they don't, they could lose their job at the next election if your parents and friends decide not to vote for them.

### Why haven't they done it already?

Normally, people don't refuse to help just because they want to see you suffer. Maybe they don't know how or what to do to make the change. Maybe they don't have enough money to do it. Or maybe they simply have never thought of your idea.

### What needs to happen to make the change?

You need the people who have the power to wake up and realise this is an important change that will make

a real difference. They will be more likely to do what you ask if you can tell them exactly what to do and how and when. And if they don't have the money? No excuses - fundraise and get it for them!

## Think!

What can you do to persuade people to make the change you want?

*"But no one will listen to me! They won't care what one person thinks!"*

You're right, they won't. This is why you need to get support. Ask friends, family or your teachers to help you. Two heads are better than one, and even more are even better. Get together and think of what you can do to make your change. Start a Campaigns Group in your school and meet regularly to push your idea along from start to finish.

### Top Tip

Scribble down any and all of your ideas on a big piece of paper or a white board. That way, after a long, confusing ideas session, you can look at them all and pick the best, or a combination of the best.

### What are you good at? / What do you enjoy?

Art, sport, creative writing, dance, drama, organisation, motivating other people to help you, getting (positive) attention, arguing your point of view...these are all skills which can be used to make your change.

### How much money do you have?

Be realistic...building a new state of the art stadium with diamond studded goal posts for your local under 16s football team probably isn't going to happen. But you could convince the council get you a new training ground and raise money towards building new changing rooms.

### How much time can you give?

You have important, and fun, stuff to do in your life apart from this campaign so think about how much time you can and want to give to it. Think of ways to get maximum effect for minimum time spent.

Signing a petition is really quick and easy but doesn't have a big effect individually. Raising money for a charity is a bit more effort but even a small amount can make a real difference to someone's life. Look at Plan's Gifts for Life website to see what different amounts of money can do [www.gifts4life.org](http://www.gifts4life.org)

### Plan of action!

How can you use your skills to take action? Here are some ideas and tips...but your own ideas or adding your own style to one of these will be even better – a 'never seen before' project is the best thing to grab people's attention.

### Pester power

If a change isn't happening because the people with the power to make the change aren't interested, haven't thought about it or think it will be unpopular - you need to make them sit up and listen. This is where you show them that lots of people feel the same way as you and are prepared to take action.

### Run a petition

Another great way to show you have lots of people on your side is to get them to sign a petition. It's quick and easy for your supporter to sign, meaning they are more likely to do this than something that they have to spend more time on.

Begin with a short statement saying what you want and why. This often starts with "We, the undersigned..." meaning everyone who has signed their names under your statement.

Then get everyone you can to sign and put their name and address or other contact details – this is to prove you haven't just invented the names. Remember to draw up a table with space for them to do this.

Make sure people understand what they are signing. You should be prepared to explain your campaign as you ask people to sign and maybe have leaflets or fact sheets to help inform them. Don't pressure people to sign if they don't agree with you. This will only work if you have genuine supporters.

Then send or give your petition to the people who have the power to make your change, with a letter giving a bit more information about what you want to happen and why.

### Write a letter – or two!

What if the person who you're targeting needs more convincing? Writing a letter, or email, to the person who has the power to make your change will make them think about your idea.

## Real Life

Amnesty International is one of the best known and most respected international charities. They campaign to stop human rights abuses around the world.

A lot of their campaign work is getting their supporters to write letters to ask governments to stop torture or to free people who are in jail just for saying what they think (many people are sent to prison for criticising their governments).

It works! Over the last 40 years, hundreds of people have been freed thanks to Amnesty's pressure. Check out Amnesty's latest success stories on their page:

<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/aboutai-goodnews-eng>

If they get two letters saying the same thing they'll think a little bit more about it.

If they get three, they'll think a bit more still. And if they get 103...you get the idea.

This will show them your supporters care enough to do more than just sign their name, and will make a big impact when they open their inbox or look at their post!

## Top Letter Writing Tips

**Use a formal letter layout.** It makes you look intelligent, mature and someone to be taken seriously. If you are writing emails, make sure they all have the same, clear subject line.

Your address
Their address
Date
Dear _____,
LETTER
Your sincerely,
Your signature
Your name

**Be tidy.** Type your letter or write it out neatly. Also divide your letter into clear paragraphs. This makes it easier to read and will make a good first impression.

**Use the person's name.** This will help make sure the person you are writing to actually gets the letter, not just their assistant. It also makes it more personal for them. Look on their organisation's website or call and ask the receptionist to the name of the person you want. Also, make sure you get the address right!

In the UK, there's a great website to find out MP's names and all about them - [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)

**Introduce yourself.** Explain who you are and why you are writing. It will make your letter stand out. Remember, you can introduce yourself as an individual or as a member of a group. For example, you could write “I am a student at St John’s school in the third year and my classmates and I are very concerned about...”

**Flatter them.** You always get more out of people when you’re nice to them. But don’t go over the top and keep it truthful. Research the positive work they have done on similar issues.

For example, you could write something like “After your excellent work on improving public transport, I hope that you will also work to protect the environment by supporting our recycling project.”

**Explain clearly** what action you want them to take, how and when. Make this realistic and show you understand their budget, other time commitments and pressures. Remember to explain what brilliant results this action will have.

**Be polite.** No one wants to do something for someone who is rude to them. Always thank them for taking the time to read your letter – it will leave them with a good impression of you. You can use standard phrases to end the letter in a professional way. For example: “Many thanks for taking the time to read this letter.” “If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.” “I look forward to hearing from you.”

**Be brief.** Your letter should be one page maximum. The idea of your letter is to grab their attention, get them interested in your idea and show them lots of people feel the same. Remember, you can include links or places to find more information. You could even ask for a meeting when you can tell them all the details yourself.

## Raise awareness

Do people know about the change you want to make or the issue around it? Maybe they have never heard of it or perhaps they just need reminding how important it is. How can you get them thinking about it?

## Get creative

Think about what creative skills you have, or people you know who are interested in the issue have. Ask them to help you put together a piece of work which explains the issue. Plan an event to show this to anyone else who would be interested.

If you are good at drama or dance, you could put on a play or a show. Musicians could write songs, hold a concert or even record a CD (if you have the facilities). Perhaps you can produce a magazine full of stories and poems inspired by your issue. Artists could produce an exhibition with your issue as its theme.

## TOP TIP

If you want loads of people to write, you can write a standard, example letter for people to copy or just to sign. It’s quicker and easier for your supporters so more people will do it. It’s the number of letters that will have an impact; they don’t all have to be different.

Most of the big charities, including Amnesty, which run this type of campaign, provide standard letters.

By charging an entrance fee you can make this work as a fundraising event at the same time. Look at the fundraising events section for advice on how to make it work.

### Write to the editor

Think about what kind of magazine or newspaper people who might support you read. If you want a change in your school then write to your school paper. If it's a change in your local area, or if there is an event in your local area, then try your local paper. National newspapers will reach more people, but they'll get lots more letters so there is less chance your letter will get printed. Perhaps there's a special interest magazine or e-zine that is about the same issue (e.g. an environmental magazine). Write to more than one type paper if you want to reach as many people as possible.

Look at letters published in the last edition, how effective were they at explaining the author's opinion? What made them effective or not? What kinds of letters did the newspaper publish? Why do you think they were published?

Look at the letter writing tips. Most of these apply to this too. But remember when you are writing a letter to a newspaper you need to add what people can do to support you. Maybe there is a charity working on this issue that they can donate money to. Maybe you can ask them to come to an event you are holding or donate to your own fundraising efforts.

### Fundraise

Governments, local and national, and other organisations, like schools, have to split their money between lots of different and very important areas. If your change isn't essential it can mean there simply isn't any left money to pay for it. Your head teacher has to pay your teachers before buying new computers, for example.

Fundraising means you collect money which will only be spent on your change. Find out how much is needed to make your change and work out if you can raise all of this money. If you can't, can anyone else donate the extra or can you make a smaller change for the money you can raise?

Here's some of most successful ways people fundraise.

### Sponsor me!

Marathons, danceathons, singathons, readathons, cycle rides, sponsored silences, baked bean baths, dressing as a chicken.....people have completed hundreds of exciting, creative challenges all to raise money to try and improve their world.

What can you think of? Remember, a 'challenge' is something difficult - no one will give you money to do something easy or that you do anyway!

Is this challenge something you'll do alone or with a group of friends? If lots of you do it, that equals lots more sponsor money and lots more fun! Where will you do it? Is it something you can do at home? If it is, how can you prove to your sponsors you really did it? If you want a public space so people can come and watch, ask your school or local community centre. What equipment do you need,

before, during and after? Make sure you plan carefully, including a mini celebration for after you complete your challenge.

You'll need sponsor forms, where people agree in writing to give you money if you complete your challenge, and where you can keep count of the money you have collected when you've completed it. If you are giving the money to a big charity they may already have forms they can give you. If not, design your own!

## Events

A fundraising event can be anything that involves people giving you money and having fun at the same time. It can work to raise awareness of your issue at the same time as raising money, if you theme the event around it.

For example...

Charging an **entrance fee** to a show, exhibition or club night can work well. Remember, charging a lot of money can stop people coming; but if you get lots of people there, every person's small contribution will add up to lots of cash!

**Selling things** from cakes to jewellery is another great way to persuade people to part with their cash.

Running **a competition or a raffle** where people pay to enter also tempts them to donate, especially if you great prizes up for grabs.

Adding up all these ideas, adds up to even more money!

Once you know what event you are going to run, where, when and how much you are going to charge people to come you need to persuade people to come. Think about who you want to come and how you can let them know about your event.

### TOP TIP

The secret to raising lots of money from an event is spending as little as possible to hold it. Make what you can as cheaply as possible and persuade people to donate things you need for free.

Ask your school or community centre to let you use their hall for free, ask local shops to donate competition prizes, ask a local supermarket to give you food and drink to sell or a local printing shop to print entrance tickets.

In return they get to help a great cause and, of course, you'll give them lots of great publicity by making sure everyone who comes to your event knows how generous they've been. Offer to put the company's logo and name on the tickets, posters at the event and/or any advertising you do.

A special assembly and a note in the school newsletter will let other students and their families know about it. Posters in local shop windows or public notice boards will reach people in your community. Your local newspaper might want to write an article on your event or at least put an advert about it in the next edition.

Also make sure you tell everyone you know and ask them to tell everyone they know and everyone they know to tell everyone they know again! That makes a lot of people.

## Do It Yourself

Making small, local improvements to individual people's lives can add up to a big effect if enough people do it. It's also the type of change that people most notice in their day to day lives.

Organising a team to clean up a local park or paint a mural in a public space can really make a difference to your local community. Remember to check with the council or whoever owns the space you want to improve!

Volunteering with a local organization can also be a great way to make a real difference. It's also a great way to meet new people and learn new skills, which looks great on your CV!

More information about UK volunteering and a search for opportunities in your area. (Remember to check if the charity can accept young volunteers, especially if you are under 16)

[www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk) or [www.youthactionnetwork.org.uk](http://www.youthactionnetwork.org.uk)

Join the Youth Mediators Network to get involved in conflict resolution events across the UK.

<http://www.leaplinx.com/ymn/>

## Jump on a bandwagon

If you don't have lots of free time the quickest and easiest way to help change the world is to join someone else's campaign. With as little as a single mouse click you can make your contribution. Search the web for charities working on whatever you're interested in and see what simple things they are asking you to do to help. Look at the links below to get you started:

### Without leaving your chair

Click and raise money to help the fight against world hunger, and it doesn't cost you a penny!

[www.hungersite.org](http://www.hungersite.org)

VSO, an international volunteering service, shows regularly updated easy actions you can take NOW!

[http://www.vso.org.uk/awareness\\_action/easy\\_actions/](http://www.vso.org.uk/awareness_action/easy_actions/)

Look in WaterAid's 'Take Action' section to write to your MP or MEP to improve the EU water initiative to help the 1.1 billion people living without clean water or toilets.

[http://www.wateraid.org.uk/uk/get\\_involved/campaigns/default.asp](http://www.wateraid.org.uk/uk/get_involved/campaigns/default.asp)

Christian Aid's campaigns site, includes lots of emails you can send to government ministers on top issues and the "Say it with Worms" project.

<http://www.pressureworks.org.uk/>

Amnesty International's latest campaigns - send your letter too!

<http://www.amnesty.org/actnow/>

Join the environmental letter writing campaign to save the planet.

<http://www.globalresponse.org/>

### Get off the sofa!

Following on from the Make Poverty History 2005 campaign, the "Keep Campaigning" section has a great search tool of different campaigns to get involved in about world trade, aid, debt and HIV.

<http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/keepcampaigning/>

Oxfam's "Cool Planet" page has a 'take action' section with lots of ideas.

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/kidsweb/index.htm>

Invite a returned VSO volunteer to tell your school about their experiences helping people around the world or join a local group near you.

[http://www.vso.org.uk/awareness\\_action/actions\\_for\\_change.asp](http://www.vso.org.uk/awareness_action/actions_for_change.asp)

Civil society organisation "Your Turn" programme for under 18s (aimed at Year 9). Search for events near you by postcode.

<http://www.commonpurpose.org.uk/home/public/programmes/under18/yourturn.aspx>

Lots of cool information, events and ways to take action.

[www.oxfam.org.uk/generationwhy](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/generationwhy)

Lots of ways to help save the planet with Greenpeace.

<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/getinvolved>