



## BRIEFING PAPER

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# Parliament's engagement with the public

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## Summary

This Briefing Paper reviews Parliament's engagement with the public. It outlines the concept of procedural justice, defined as: the fairness of the process by which decisions are made, and the role participants may have in this.<sup>1</sup> This Paper explores the concept's potential in providing a framework of ideas against which it is possible to examine how Parliament engages with the public. This is the first stage of a project undertaken through the House of Commons Academic Fellowship Scheme (see Box 1) to examine whether procedural justice can be a helpful tool to explore how Parliament's engagement is conducted.

Until relatively recently, almost all engagement with Parliament was between MPs and their constituents, with little institutional support. This began to change in 1978, when a House of Commons Enquiry Service was set up to answer queries from the public, and the first Education Officer was appointed in 1980.

Two reports arguably underpinned the impetus for improving institutional engagement with the public:

- The Select Committee on Modernisation of the House of Commons produced *Connecting Parliament with the Public* (2004), and
- The 2005 Puttnam Commission's report, *Members Only? Parliament in the Public Eye*, for the Hansard Society.

There are a variety of reasons for Parliament seeking to engage with the public, including to increase public understanding of Parliament and its work, to broaden the range of voices heard by Parliament, and potentially to enhance legitimacy. In addition, individual services and structures within Parliament may have their own, sometimes different (and multiple), motivations for involving the public. There are also questions about who engagement is sought with. For some initiatives it might be 'the public' as a whole, while for others it might, for example, be school children, university students, or people affected by particular government policies or actions that are the subject of a select committee inquiry.

### Box 1: House of Commons Academic Fellowship Scheme

The House of Commons Academic Fellowship Scheme is run in partnership with the Political Studies Association. It was launched at the end of 2016 and five Academic Fellows were appointed in the first round. The Fellowships are an opportunity for senior political and social scientists to study the work of Parliament, to provide expertise, to contribute to a number of events to help build public understanding of Parliament, and to inform and enhance the work of the House.

Catherine Bochel, Reader in Policy Studies, University of Lincoln, has been awarded an academic fellowship under the title "Procedural Justice: A Fair Process for Public Engagement?"

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<sup>1</sup> C Bochel, '[Process Matters: Petitions Systems in Britain's Legislatures](#)', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2016, p371

# 1. Background

## 1.1 Scope of the research

This research looks at Parliament's engagement with the public and explores the extent to which it is or could be underpinned by a procedural justice framework.

There are two stages to the research: the first is a scoping exercise to explore the nature and extent of Parliament's engagement with the public (reported in this briefing paper); following that, a number of forms of two-way engagement will be selected to study in greater depth.

The research will then develop a framework to measure the extent to which these forms of engagement are underpinned by elements of procedural justice. This is important, as encouraging people to get involved with Parliament is just a starting point in the engagement process. What happens to people once they get involved is key: when people come into contact with Parliament, is their experience of the process positive?

What happens when people engage is important for a number of reasons: in a liberal democratic system people may not get all or any of what they ask for, so their treatment by the system and experience of it is very important; in such systems, final decisions are made by elected representatives, so the public must be able to see that the decision making process is fair and transparent; and finally, it may affect not only how the public view the individual elements of engagement with which they have contact, but also the wider political and governmental processes. Where examples of engagement initiatives are found to be underpinned by elements of procedural justice, then it may be appropriate for other initiatives to use these as a model of good practice.

## 1.2 Parliament's engagement with the public

In recent years there have been a number of publications setting out the need for greater engagement with the public.

Two reports arguably underpinned the impetus for improving engagement with the public. The Select Committee on Modernisation of the House of Commons produced *Connecting Parliament with the Public*, in 2004, and that was followed by the 2005 Puttnam Commission's report, *Members Only? Parliament in the Public Eye*, for the Hansard Society. The purpose of the former was "to make recommendations which will better reconcile the necessary purpose of Parliament with the reasonable expectation of the people to have access to the processes by which we govern ourselves".<sup>2</sup> It suggested that:

It serves no-one if we make it difficult for voters to understand what their elected representatives are doing. Too often the

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<sup>2</sup> Modernisation of the House of Commons, [Connecting Parliament with the Public](#), 16 June 2004, HC 368 2003-04, para 1

impression is given that the House of Commons is a private club, run for the benefit of its Members, where members of the public are tolerated only on sufferance.<sup>3</sup>

It made recommendations on the citizenship curriculum, educational resources, outreach work, making visitors to Parliament welcome, Standing Committees, petitions, the internet as a tool for wider communication, the media and promoting Hansard.

The Puttnam Commission report, a year later, underlined the scale of the task, saying:

We want to see a Parliament which is an accessible and readily understood institution, which people know how to approach, and when and where to make their voice heard, a Parliament which relates its work to the concerns of those in the outside world. This is the challenge'.<sup>4</sup>

These were followed by Strategic Plans for the House of Commons and the House of Lords 2006-11, which incorporated an objective "to improve public understanding", and the first cross-Parliament Public Engagement Strategy (2006-11), with its focus on young people.<sup>5</sup>

In 2009, the House of Lords Information Committee's report, *Are the Lords Listening? Creating connections between people and Parliament*, made recommendations on outreach and education, engagement via online communication, and the press and media, aimed at reconnecting Parliament with the public. It made specific recommendations about how the House of Lords might improve public understanding of its work.<sup>6</sup>

This was followed by the Wright Committee's (House of Commons Reform Committee, 2009) *Rebuilding the House*,<sup>7</sup> and the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee's subsequent inquiry into the impact of the Wright reforms (in 2013),<sup>8</sup> both of which highlighted the need for greater public engagement with Parliament.

The second five-year cross-Parliament public engagement strategy, 2011-2016, built on the progress of the previous five years and set out key milestones, including, for example, running annual campaigns, the release of an online Parliament and Democracy game, opening the Education Centre, extending the outreach programme to formal education and other priority groups, celebrating 750 years of Parliament and 800 years since Magna Carta, and improving the visitor experience in and around Westminster.

The cross-Parliament Public Engagement Strategies were overseen by the Group on Information for the Public, which included officials from

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, para 2

<sup>4</sup> Puttnam Commission (2005) *Members Only? Parliament in the Public Eye*, para 7.3

<sup>5</sup> Aileen Walker, 'A People's Parliament?', *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 65, no. 1, pp. 270-280

<sup>6</sup> Information Committee, [\*Are the Lords Listening? Creating connections between people and Parliament\*](#), 15 July 2009, HL Paper 138-I 2008-09

<sup>7</sup> House of Commons Reform Committee, [\*Rebuilding the House\*](#), 24 November 2009, HC 1117 2008-09

<sup>8</sup> Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, [\*Revisiting Rebuilding the House: the impact of the Wright reforms\*](#), 18 July 2013, HC 82 2013-14

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both Houses. Now both Houses support both bicameral and unicameral public engagement activities and both Houses have a strategic objective that focuses on public engagement:

- House of Commons: “*Involving and inspiring the public* – We will open up the House of Commons to the public and show how it is essential to democracy, and changing for the better”.<sup>9</sup>
- House of Lords: “Promote public understanding of the House of Lords and engagement with its work”.<sup>10</sup>

[\*Open Up! Report of the Speaker's Commission on Digital Democracy\*](#) (2015), commissioned by the Speaker of the House of Commons, recognised the potential for digital technology, and made recommendations including that Parliament should be “fully interactive and digital”, that there should be a “forum for public participation in the debating function of the House...”, that “secure online voting should be an option for all voters”, and that “all published information and broadcast footage produced by Parliament should be freely available online in formats suitable for re-use. Hansard should be available as open data by the end of 2015”.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, it recognised that technology “is only part of the answer”, and that it is important that the processes underpinning democracy work well and that technology can then help to improve them.<sup>12</sup>

The House of Commons Liaison Committee's 2015 report, *Building public engagement: Options for developing select committee outreach*, reported on research it commissioned from the Crick Centre, University of Sheffield, into “select committees' effectiveness ‘in using inquiries to further public understanding of political issues’”. The conclusions reinforced the recommendations made by the Speaker's Commission on Digital Democracy, noting that there had been “a significant shift within the select committee system to taking public engagement seriously and this is reflected in many examples of innovation”. However, the report recognised that this was not uniformly spread across all committees.<sup>13</sup>

As noted above both Houses continue to have strategic objectives relating to public engagement.

Taken together, these reports highlight the emphasis on engagement, and the progress that has been made. However, they also make clear that barriers to engagement remain, including a tension between participative initiatives and representative democracy.

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<sup>9</sup> House of Commons, [House of Commons Service Corporate Business Plan 2017/18](#), p4

<sup>10</sup> House of Lords, [Business Plan of the House of Lords Administration 2017/18](#), 27 April 2017, HL Paper 168 2016-17, p4

<sup>11</sup> Digital Democracy Commission, [Open Up! Report of the Speaker's Commission on Digital Democracy](#), January 2015, p7

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p14

<sup>13</sup> Liaison Committee, [Building public engagement: Options for developing select committee outreach](#), 30 November 2015, HC 470 2015-16

### 1.3 Procedural justice: A literature review

Procedural justice can be defined as: *the fairness of the process by which decisions are made, and the role participants may have in this*.<sup>14</sup> It includes different ideas and characteristics, recognising that different authors define the concept in different ways and emphasise different characteristics. Blader and Tyler (2003), for example, refer to it as a “fair process”,<sup>15</sup> Thibaut and Walker (1975) developed a control model looking at the level of voice or participation that procedures allow,<sup>16</sup> and Maguire and Lind (2003) included “respect” and “fair treatment”,<sup>17</sup> whilst Tsuchiya et al. (2005) highlighted “accuracy; consistency; impartiality; reversibility; transparency and voice”.<sup>18</sup> Importantly, while recognising that “self-interest” concerns, in terms of outcomes, may affect people’s judgements, the literature sees “process” as having intrinsic value, so that people’s experiences of how they are treated may play a significant role in their judgements, rather than simply what they have achieved or not achieved.<sup>19</sup>

Drawing on the literature above, Bochel (2016) identified a number of key characteristics of procedural justice: voice (and participation); decision-making; transparency; treatment; legitimacy and trust.<sup>20</sup> The first three of these might be termed ‘system’ characteristics, because the parameters for these activities are effectively set by the organisations which determine the processes to be used, and they can be explored by looking at the ways in which these processes operate. They can therefore be seen as important indicators of procedural justice. Views of treatment, legitimacy and trust are different, because they are judgements made by people on the impact on them of the ‘system characteristics’,<sup>21</sup> and they would need to be explored by talking to individuals involved in initiatives.

The project outlined here focuses on the system characteristics of procedural justice, because the parameters for different participatory initiatives are set by the particular systems and processes, and it is these “that are likely to facilitate, or hinder, the extent of procedural justice”.<sup>22</sup> This concept has previously been used as an analytical tool to

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<sup>14</sup> C Bochel, ‘Process Matters: Petitions Systems in Britain’s Legislatures’, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2016, p371

<sup>15</sup> SL Blader and T Tyler, ‘A four component model of procedural justice: Defining the meaning of a “fair” process’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 29, no. 6, 2003, p747

<sup>16</sup> J Thibaut, and L Walker, *Procedural justice*, 1975

<sup>17</sup> LA Maguire and EA Lind, ‘Public participation in environmental decisions: Stakeholders, authorities and procedural justice’, *International Journal of Global Environmental Issues*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2003, p1344

<sup>18</sup> A Tsuchiya, LS Miguel, R Edlin and A Wailoo, ‘Procedural justice in public healthcare resource allocation’, *Applied Health Economics and Health Policy*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2005, p119

<sup>19</sup> TR Tyler, ‘The psychology of legitimacy: A relational perspective on voluntary deference to authorities’, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1997, p326

<sup>20</sup> C Bochel, ‘[Process Matters: Petitions Systems in Britain’s Legislatures](#)’, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2016, pp368-384

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p372

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p372

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explore petitions systems in the UK.<sup>23</sup> This research explores its potential use in providing a framework of ideas against which it is possible to examine how Parliament engages with the public.

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<sup>23</sup> See for example, *ibid* and C Carman, 'The process is the reality: Perceptions of procedural fairness and participatory democracy', *Political Studies*, vol. 58, 2010, pp731–751

## 2. Parliament's public engagement

### 2.1 The scope of engagement

Until relatively recently, almost all engagement with Parliament was between MPs and their constituents, with little institutional support. This began to change in 1978, when a House of Commons Enquiry Service was set up to answer queries from the public, and the first Education Officer was appointed in 1980.<sup>24</sup> Since then, Parliament has increasingly sought to engage with the public, so that today citizens can get involved formally and informally in a wide variety of different ways. They can engage with Parliament in person, online, and by joining events or learning programmes run in Parliament and across the country.<sup>25</sup>

At this point it is important to note that the concern here is with Parliament's attempts to engage with the public, and therefore primarily with initiatives from inside Parliament, rather than developments outside Parliament, which may also be seeking to enable higher levels of engagement.<sup>26</sup>

The scoping exercise has identified the main types of engagement, considered the purposes of engagement, including who engagement is sought with, and considered different ways in which we might view or categorise these. Table 1 illustrates many of these possibilities.

*Table 1: Parliamentary engagement with the public*

<b>Main forms of Parliamentary engagement with the public</b>	<b>Examples – how, where, or by what mechanism the public might do this</b>
The House of Commons Enquiry Service and/or the House of Lords Enquiry Service	By email By phone By post Online
MPs and Peers	Find your MP online Search for members of the House of Lords online Contact an MP or a Lord about a Bill, or a personal or constituency matter Lords Digital Chamber - website featuring social media feeds from peers and political groups

<sup>24</sup> A Walker, 'A People's Parliament?', *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 65, no. 1, 2012, p270

<sup>25</sup> Some statistical information about numbers of participants and satisfaction with activities is reported in the House of Commons Library Briefing Paper, [Public engagement in the UK Parliament: overview and statistics](#), CBP 8158, 24 November 2017

<sup>26</sup> As noted above, both Houses have worked together on some engagement activities and separately on others. The scoping exercise has reviewed all activity

<b>Main forms of Parliamentary engagement with the public</b>	<b>Examples – how, where, or by what mechanism the public might do this</b>
Petitions (a) UK Government and Parliament system (b) House of Commons (c) House of Lords	Create an e-petition Sign an e-petition Ask an MP to present a paper petition Ask a Peer to present a petition
Watch Parliament – in person, or online	Debates in the Commons Chamber and Westminster Hall Committees Question time Debates in the Lords Chamber and Moses Room Parliament TV
Follow Parliament through	Twitter Flickr YouTube Facebook Instagram Newsletters Alerts
Parliamentary apps	Commons Vote results A Day in the Commons: House of Commons Order Papers HousePapers
Select Committee inquiries	Submitting written evidence to a Select Committee Giving oral evidence to a Select Committee Taking part in informal group discussions and events around the UK so that MPs and Peers can hear directly from members of the public Taking part in online evidence sessions, perhaps through a partner organisation; or web fora
Public Bill Committees	Attending Public Bill Committee meetings Contacting an MP about a Bill Contacting a member of the Lords about a Bill Submitting written evidence to a Public Bill Committee Giving oral evidence to a Public Bill Committee
Follow legislation online	Follow the progress of current and draft Bills before Parliament Go online to comment on Bills
Object to a Private Bill	Those specifically and directly affected by a private Bill can petition against it

<b>Main forms of Parliamentary engagement with the public</b>	<b>Examples – how, where, or by what mechanism the public might do this</b>
Digital debates	Take part in a digital debate. For example, on Carers, IVF and Fertility Services, Free Childcare. This may inform debates in the Commons Chamber and Westminster Hall
Parliamentary Archives	Public search room Enquiries about the archives Tours – virtual, guided, audio, free General Election tours for 18-24 year olds Displays and Exhibitions – the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War; Vote 100 Art in Parliament – parliamentarians, the Palace of Westminster, elections and voting, historic events
Learning programmes – learn or teach about Parliament and parliamentary processes	Universities programme Women in Parliament programme Adults with Learning Disabilities programme: EMPOWER! Train the Trainer Education Service Peers in Schools Resources for Groups, for example, ‘Customs and Traditions of the House of Commons’, and ‘Acts of Parliament that have led to change’
Workshops and presentations for civic organisations and groups	Join a workshop or presentation: People, Power and Parliament – An Introduction to Your UK Parliament Making the Law – How do Laws Actually Get Made? Are You Influential? Get Your Voice Heard in the UK Parliament What is a Select Committee and Why Should You Care?
Public Engagement Projects	UK Parliament Week 13-19 November 2017 Parliament at Pride 7-9 July 2017 London History Day 31 May 2017 Vote 100 Your Story, Our History films People and Parliament: Connecting with Communities Parliament in the Making

<b>Main forms of Parliamentary engagement with the public</b>	<b>Examples – how, where, or by what mechanism the public might do this</b>
Education Service	Education Centre visits and tours Election Toolkits - for schools to run their own mock elections Create the debate – pack to help students develop their debating skills Votes for Women: the first mass petition online resource MP for a week game Seminars/CPD sessions in Parliament for teachers, trainees and education professionals Teacher Ambassador Programme Speaker's School Council Awards Skype the Speaker Lords Live School visits from MPs and Lords Workshops and assemblies
Chamber events	The House of Lords opens up the chamber once a year and invites people to debating events The House of Commons hosts the UK Youth Parliament annual sitting in the chamber during Parliament Week
Literature	Posters Leaflets Guides Hansard Research briefings

## 2.2 The purposes of engagement

As noted in section 1.2 above, there are a variety of reasons for Parliament seeking to engage with the public, including to increase public understanding of Parliament and its work, to broaden the range of voices heard by Parliament, and potentially to enhance legitimacy.<sup>27</sup> In addition, individual services and structures within Parliament may have their own, sometimes different (and multiple), motivations for involving the public. For example, for some services, the concern may be to increase the number and diversity of people who engage with Parliament, and/or to enhance what the public can gain from their involvement, perhaps through learning about how Parliament works, or its history, through watching committees and debates, taking part in workshops, tours, events and exhibitions; for others the potential benefits might be seen as being more about what the service can gain from the public, perhaps in order to help scrutinise and hold to account the government, or to help bring about policy change, including

<sup>27</sup> The [Get Involved](#) page on the parliamentary website indicates a number of different ways of in which people can engage with Parliament

through encouraging the public to provide formal or informal evidence to select committees, or to take part in a digital debate. In its report on select committee effectiveness, resources and powers, the Liaison Committee included a public engagement objective in its list of revised core tasks for select committees: "To assist the House of Commons in better engaging with the public by ensuring that the work of the committee is accessible to the public".<sup>28</sup> Later in the same report it noted that committees had reported "some interesting approaches which have succeeded in broadening the committee's audience and evidence-base". The Liaison Committee noted that a number of committees had made informal visits or held informal public meetings "to talk to those directly affected by the issue under inquiry". It then commented that "As well as informing committees' inquiries, visits also provide an opportunity to engage the public in parliamentary activity and to explain the role of select committees".<sup>29</sup>

There are also, of course, questions about who engagement is sought with. For some initiatives it might be 'the public' as a whole, while for others it might, for example, be school children, university students, or people affected by particular government policies or actions that are the subject of a select committee inquiry. It is therefore necessary to be clear in each case why particular 'publics' are being targeted for engagement.

## 2.3 Types of engagement

Table 1 highlights the wide variety of ways in which Parliament currently engages with the public. It seeks to set out the main forms of engagement, and provides some examples of how engagement can take place. It is intended to be illustrative, rather than comprehensive, in terms of the examples given. It is important to note also that some of the examples may fit in one or more box. For example, the Vote 100 programme is run by a number of services, and thus elements of it can fall under 'Parliamentary Archives', as well as 'Public Engagement Projects'. It is also worth noting that new and different forms of engagement continue to develop.

The table also encourages us to think about the different ways in which we might categorise and analyse these initiatives. For example, some might be described as broadly 'one-way', where for the most part Parliament provides information to the public, through leaflets, posters, guides and publications and the website. More pertinently for this project, there has been something of a shift towards more 'two-way' forms, which involve Parliament providing opportunities for dialogue with members of the public. While the provision of information about Parliament and its activities is clearly in itself potentially valuable, and the scope and reach have arguably been significantly enhanced both by the variety of parliamentary information made available, and the increasing range of channels through which the public can access them,

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<sup>28</sup> Liaison Committee, [Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers](#), 8 November 2012, HC 697 2012-13, para 20

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, paras 57-59

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in a one-way approach Parliament is to some extent passive, relying to a considerable degree on the public seeking out information, while the public, in turn, do not have any direct channels for communication back to Parliament. However, in many areas Parliament's activities have taken more active, two-way approaches to engagement, enabling different degrees of dialogue between Parliament and the public. These vary widely, from outreach activities, such as going out into communities and running workshops and programmes for local people, schools or universities, to select committees using social media to select questions for evidence sessions, or even to gather evidence, and, of course, the traditional means of contact between MPs and Peers and the public.

Arguably most of the areas of activity in Table 1 have seen an expansion in recent years, in part as a result of the development of ICT, and perhaps social media in particular, which have provided new and faster channels for the provision of information, and to some extent dialogue, but also because of developments within Parliament, including the growth of outreach and educational activities.

It might also be possible to differentiate between, for example, some forms of Parliamentary engagement that are effectively 'led' by politicians, such as MPs' contacts with their constituents, and perhaps select committee inquiries, and others, such as education and outreach activities, which might involve MPs and Peers, but which are led by officials, although they may sometimes share the same goals.

An alternative form of classification might be to consider whether participatory activities are 'bottom-up', as for example with the UK government and Parliament petitions system, which allows members of the public to provide input on their own initiative, albeit in a particular and in some respects limited form, or perhaps more 'top-down', as with the publication of draft bills or invitations to submit evidence to select committee inquiries, where the subject matter and the scope for public input, are clearly defined by the particular needs of the parliamentary activity.

That, in turn, might lead to a consideration of the particular publics that are the focus of initiatives. As noted earlier, some forms of engagement activity can be seen to be aimed at 'the public' as a whole, such as making information available through the website, social media and the broadcast media; some, perhaps most notably the petitions system, aim to encourage large numbers of the public to engage in a fairly simple and straightforward way by making their views known to Parliament and the government; while others are aimed at more specific sections of society, such as school and university outreach activities, or calls for evidence for select committee inquiries that are likely to be targeted at and appeal to particular groups.

The categorisations above can help us understand the different motivations for and the variety of ways in which Parliament's engagement with the public can be conceived, and, taken together, help illustrate that the reality is one of wide-ranging activities reflecting varied aims and objectives and aimed at different audiences. The

purpose of the next stage of this research is therefore to consider what the idea of procedural justice can tell us about a selection of these initiatives, and how that might inform Parliament's engagement activities in the future.

## 2.4 Other public engagement with Parliament

Not all engagement is facilitated by Parliament. There are ways in which the public can engage with Parliament through other organisations. Some of these forms of engagement can be termed "external" as Parliament is not involved at all. Others can be termed "hybrid" as Parliament in some way refers to them (for example in literature or on its website) or supports or assists the organisation that provides the engagement.

The Lords of the Blog is an example of external engagement. It is an independent forum run by the Hansard Society, enabling members of the House of Lords to talk about their life and work, and the public to learn more about particular aspects of Parliament, while the public can also post comments.

Hybrid forms of engagement include

- The UK Youth Parliament, while it is entirely independent, Parliament nevertheless facilitates the UK Youth Parliament's annual sitting in the House of Commons Chamber, and funds part of it.
- In the run-up to the 2017 General Election, the Electoral Commission encouraged people to register to vote. Parliament supported this campaign, produced postcards highlighting *You can't Vote. Unless you've registered by 22 May, I've registered to vote* badges, and provided electronic sign up to register to vote in Westminster Hall. There were also free visits to Parliament for 18-24 year olds, alongside social media targeting.
- Operation Black Vote (OBV) Parliamentary Shadowing Scheme is a collaboration between the House of Commons and OBV which enables Black, Asian, and minority ethnic participants to experience the workings of Parliament by shadowing an MP or Peer.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, other forms of engagement are included in literature from Parliament, and/or on the Parliament website, such as joining or starting a campaign, and organising mass lobbies and demonstrations at Parliament. Here Parliament provides information on how to go about doing these activities.

Both Houses work with the press and the media to promote the work they are doing around parliamentary engagement with the public, to enable citizens to know how and when they might get involved, as well as highlighting the impact of the work of the Houses on government.

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<sup>30</sup> Houses of Parliament news, [Parliamentary shadowing schemes launches](#), 19 January 2018

### 3. A 'good process' for Parliamentary engagement with the public?

Parliament engages with the public in a wide variety of ways, and these might be categorised as one-dimensional, two-dimensional, passive or active approaches, led by politicians, led by officials, or top-down, or bottom-up.

The purposes of engagement are many and varied, with differing aims and motivations and frequently emanating from different parts of Parliament. As a result, it may be difficult for those outside Parliament to be clear about the potential scope for engagement.

Different sectors of 'the public' are targeted for engagement by different initiatives and it is important that the public are aware of the parameters for their involvement.

A 'good process' for Parliamentary engagement with the public is likely to be circular in nature. There will be a number of pre-engagement stages in which Parliament sets out why it wishes to engage with the public, and in particular why it wishes to engage with specific groups or the public as a whole, and during which it identifies the appropriate mechanisms to achieve its aims. During those stages, and as initiatives are launched, it is important that for each there are clear processes in place which involve setting out for the public what they can gain from Parliament's attempts to engage with them. These processes should be transparent, consistent and fair, and should, for example, include what involvement might consist of (and how the public should engage with Parliament), the limits of any influence, and the feedback that they will receive. Parliament should also evaluate the public's experiences of engagement, not only in terms of the numbers who engage, but also the quality of the processes. The results of such evaluations can then be fed back to inform future developments.

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