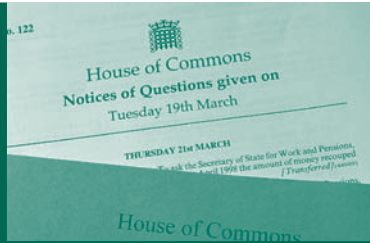




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Guidance and requirements for laying papers before the House of Commons and their publication



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Introduction

About this guide

1. This guidance note is aimed at staff in organisations required to lay papers before Parliament, but will also be of use to staff in government departments responsible for laying papers.
2. The information in this guide will help you to determine which type of document yours is and to ensure that it is presented for laying in the correct format.
3. If you have any queries, you can contact the Journal Office. The parliamentary branch of your department or parent department may also be available to offer advice. You will need to contact the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) and The Stationery Office (TSO) about publishing and printing your document, and the Vote Office to ensure that copies of the document are available to Members. Contact details are provided at the back of this booklet.

Reason and authority for laying a paper before the House

4. The purpose of laying a paper before the House of Commons is to make the information contained in the document available to the House and its Members. Members may come to the Journal Office to look at a document as soon as it is laid. Copies of laid documents should also be available in the Vote Office shortly after they are laid.¹ Depositing a paper in the House of Commons Library does not constitute laying.
5. Once a paper/document has been laid before the House, it will appear in the Appendix to the Votes and Proceedings. The Votes and Proceedings are the formal legal record of what happens in the House of Commons and are published overnight at the end of each sitting day. See: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmvote/cmvote.htm>. Please note that on some occasions the House sits through the night and into the next day. This may affect the date on which a paper is recorded as being laid.

¹ Speaker's Ruling, 25 March 2009 (HCDeb Col 307)

6. Many documents are required by law to be laid before the House. These are called Act Papers and are referred to as being laid “by Act”.² Other papers are made available to the House by the Government. These are called Command Papers and are referred to as being laid “by Command”.³
7. Documents required by law to be laid should be laid by Act rather than by Command with few exceptions. A paper cannot be laid by both Act and Command. There are some other authorities for laying which are relatively rare such as a Resolution of the House in response to a Return to an Address (see page 14 for details). If you are in any doubt as to the authority by which your document should be laid, please contact the Journal Office as early in the process as possible.
8. Documents laid before the House must be a standard format. In recent years, several documents that did not meet House of Commons requirements had to be reprinted in order to be accepted for laying. Please contact the Journal Office if you have any queries to ensure this does not happen to your document. The laid copy must be identical to the published version.
9. All Act papers must contain a title page which refers to the Act under which they are laid. This Act is sometimes referred to as the Parent Act or statutory authority. Many organisations’ annual report and accounts are required by an Act of Parliament to be laid before the House. If the reports are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General (i.e. the National Audit Office), they must be laid as a House of Commons paper, part of the HC numbered series.

² The Act that requires the document to be laid provides statutory authority.

³ The Government lays these papers “by Command” of Her Majesty under the Royal Prerogative

Parliamentary privilege

10. Papers ordered to be printed by the House of Commons enjoy the protection of absolute privilege under the Parliamentary Papers Act 1840 from the moment when they are laid. This means that legal proceedings cannot be brought against persons for the publication of the document. This type of paper is printed as part of the HC reference series which is administered by the Journal Office.
11. However, reports should not, other than in exceptional circumstances, knowingly make references or comments which are in breach of an injunction or other order of any court, or which might, without the privilege, give rise to an action for defamation. If circumstances arise when parliamentary privilege is being used to protect the content of a paper, the authorities of the House must be consulted beforehand.
12. If previous documents in the same sequence as your document have previously been published as an HC paper, or your document has sensitive content, it is likely that it should be an HC paper. **Annual report and accounts audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General must be published as HC papers.**
13. You will need to contact the Journal Office if your document is being published as an HC paper. The office can also offer advice as to whether your document should be an HC paper, and can issue an HC paper number. **There are strict requirements for the publication of HC papers. Details are given in the relevant section of this guide (Page 7).**
14. The specific requirements for the following categories of paper are set out in separate sections of this guide:
 - Act papers printed as House of Commons (HC) Papers
 - Un-numbered Act Papers
 - Command Papers (numbered and un-numbered)

This document does not provide detailed guidance on the laying

of statutory instruments although some basic information is given on page 19. Information on the preparation and making of statutory instruments and the parliamentary procedures relating to them can be found at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/statutory-instrument-practice>, or contact siregistrar@opsi.x.gsi.gov.uk .

The next two pages are a summary of the format, printing and distribution requirements for different types of document.

Papers at a glance:

Laying requirements for all papers:

- Two copies of the document, with cover letters (stapled to the front of the document) clearly setting out the title of the document, the authority for laying, what or whether parliamentary proceedings apply, and the name of the Minister formally laying the document, to be delivered to the Journal Office by hand (Government Departments have messengers who do this on a regular basis and have passes to access the Parliamentary Estate).
- Hard copies of laid documents should be available to Members of the House from the Vote Office, shortly after laying.
- The copy of the document laid before the House must be the final version. If any revision or correction is necessary after laying, please contact the Journal Office to discuss whether the document can be corrected or if it should be withdrawn and re-laid. Correction slips and relaid papers must be made available in the Vote Office (see page 23 for further information on withdrawing a paper or issuing a correction slip). If a document is laid in “proof” or “typescript”, this should be stated in the cover letter. A “proof” copy for laying must be correct and not different in any way from the final published version (see para 27b).

<p>Act Papers</p> <p>Must not be published (including on the internet) or otherwise released before laying.</p>	<p>HC Papers</p> <p>Must have a Title Page bearing specific information (see page 10). Must be A4, portrait. Must be printed in hard copy and must be published by TSO and on the Official Documents website.⁴ Copies must be available in the Vote Office shortly after laying. Should not be reproduced as part of another document. Can only be laid when the House is sitting.</p>
<p>Command Papers</p> <p>Can be laid when the House is not sitting Should ideally be part of the numbered Command series Un-numbered</p>	<p>Un-numbered</p> <p>Must have a Title Page bearing specific information (see page 9). Must be A4, portrait. Must be printed in hard copy and should be published on the Official Document’s website. Copies must be available in the Vote Office shortly after laying. Can be laid when the House is not sitting (but will be recorded as being laid on the next sitting day).⁵</p>
	<p>Numbered</p> <p>HMSO/OPSI administer the Cm. series and have specific format requirements. Contact details are at the back of this booklet. Copies must be printed in hard copy and must be published by TSO and on the Official Documents website. Copies must be available in the Vote Office shortly after laying.</p>
	<p>Un-numbered</p> <p>In some cases a paper is laid “by Command” but is not printed or published (e.g. Departmental Minutes), or has a limited distribution. Except for Explanatory Memoranda to Statutory Instruments, an electronic copy must be e-mailed to the Vote Office shortly after laying (Vote_Office@parliament.uk) to be made available to Members. Should be made available for publication on the Official Documents website.</p>

⁴ See para 21. TSO will provide furniture for the document, including an ISBN number and barcode.

⁵ These papers should therefore not be published, or otherwise released, until that sitting day.

House of Commons (HC) Papers

15. Report and Accounts audited by the National Audit Office and containing the certificate of the Comptroller and Auditor General must be laid as House of Commons papers as part of the HC numbered series.⁶ If previous documents in the same sequence as your document have previously been published as an HC paper, or your document has sensitive content, it is likely that it should be an HC paper. If in doubt, please contact the Journal Office.

16. **HC papers must not be released, i.e. in electronic format on your website, before they have been laid before Parliament and officially published by TSO.** Nor should parts of HC papers be re-printed as separate documents.⁷ The release of an HC paper before laying is a discourtesy to the House. You should plan the laying and publication of your document carefully so as to avoid being unable to publish because the House is in recess. Further information on timings of the release of documents laid before the House is given on page 22. If you anticipate that you will have difficulties in respect of this requirement you should contact the Journal Office as early in the process as possible.

⁶ Organisations whose accounts are audited by the NAO usually fall into one of the following categories: a) the Treasury has issued an accounts direction in relation to the report and accounts under the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000; b) the accounts are those of a trading fund under the Government Trading Funds Act 1973; or c) the organisation is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB).

⁷ Accounts which have been printed as part of a combined annual report should not be reprinted as a separate document. If you wish to circulate only the accounts section please contact the Journal Office.

HC numbers

17. The HC series is administered by the Journal Office. Please contact the office to discuss whether your document should be an HC paper, and to obtain an HC paper number (sometimes called a printing number). When you obtain an HC number you will need to tell us the date you plan to lay the document. If this changes you should inform the Journal Office.⁸ Printing numbers can be obtained up to four weeks in advance.
18. The printing number will remain valid unless the paper is laid in a different parliamentary session from the one originally planned. The printing number series begins again in each Session of Parliament (rather than at the start of the calendar year). Please let the Journal Office know if a printing number is no longer required.
19. A new printing number is required for each year's report and accounts. If a report and a set of accounts/financial statements are to be laid as separate documents but with the same HC number, each volume should be numbered as HC 123–I, HC 123–II etc (volumes are distinguished by uppercase roman numerals). This also applies to any document printed in volumes. Each volume must have a title page.
20. HC paper numbers may be obtained by contacting the Outer Office staff on (020) 7219 3361/3252 or by email to journaloffice@parliament.uk with the words "HC Number Request from" followed by the name of the organisation in the subject header.

⁸ The date of laying must appear on the title page of the document, after the words "Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed ...".

Printing and format requirements

21. House of Commons papers must be printed in hard copy. Electronic publishing alone does not meet the requirements of the House. The paper does not need to be expensively printed. All that is required is a clear and readable text which conforms with the rules set out below. HC papers must also be published by TSO under the terms of a contract administered by HMSO/ OPSI, even if TSO are not the printers. TSO will assign an ISBN, cover price and barcode and will oversee the initial distribution of the document to the various offices within Parliament (including the Vote Office). However, TSO are not responsible for laying the document and cannot do so on your behalf.
22. **If a document is to be printed by an organisation other than TSO, TSO must be consulted about arrangements for publication at an early stage.** HC papers not published by TSO will not be accepted for laying.
23. If you are publishing your report and accounts electronically you must ensure that the text and layout is identical to the laid version, including the requirements for a title page set out below. The electronic versions should not be published before printed copies are available in the Vote Office.
24. House of Commons Papers form part of a continuous series, which are bound together by some libraries. As part of the binding process the covers of the document are removed. This is why HC papers must have a title page containing all the necessary information about the document for the historical record. Papers that do not conform to the following requirements will not be accepted by the Journal Office:
 - a) Format requirements:
 - i) The paper must be A4 size, and must be predominantly portrait in orientation.
 - ii) Tables, etc., may be in landscape orientation, but printing the whole document in landscape is not allowed, even if the paper is bound along the long side.
 - iii) The document should be saddle stitched (stapled through

the spine) or perfect bound (glued into a cover); comb or spiral binding should not be used as this makes documents difficult to bind into volumes.

- iv) No substantive text should appear on the inside of the front or back covers, as they are usually stripped off when being bound.

b) **The document must have a title page.** The title page must be the first inside facing (recto) page of the document and may not be combined with a contents page or preface. The title page should not bear substantive text or a contents page on its reverse. The Crown Copyright notice (with the OPSI Crown Copyright statement and the publication's ISBN number) must be displayed on the reverse in accordance with the guidance issued by HMSO/OPSI. TSO will ensure that this is included in every paper they produce. Title pages should include only the information listed below in a font size that is clearly legible (a minimum of 10 point is recommended). A sample title page is reproduced in Appendix 3.

- i) The full title of the document. If the document is an annual report and accounts the statutory name (rather than an abbreviation) of the organisation and the period covered by the accounts;⁹
- ii) The legislation under which the document is being laid, e.g.:
“Presented to the House of Commons pursuant to section 7 of the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000” (for a supply-financed agency); or “Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 4(6) of the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 as amended by the Government Trading Act 1990” (for a trading fund agency);

⁹ The use of the words ‘accounts’, ‘account’ or ‘financial statements’ in the title of the publication should correspond to the heading for the financial information within the document and the covering letter.

- iii) The words “Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed” and the date of laying (in full: date month year). If the date of laying changes late in the publishing process, the title page must be updated accordingly to show the correct date;
- iv) The House of Commons printing number, towards the bottom of the title page, and in a size no smaller than 8 point (ideally 10 point or larger), the number should be preceded by the abbreviation “HC”. Ideally, this number should also appear on the front cover of the document (a sample front cover is reproduced in Appendix 2);
- v) The publishing imprint “London: The Stationery Office” and the price: these will normally be added by TSO or in consultation with them (if, for example, you are using another printer).

The Journal Office is available to check draft title pages to ensure that they are acceptable.

25. For those organisations which, unusually, expect to produce a report and accounts or other document as separate volumes the requirements about title pages apply to *each volume*, and each title page should make it clear that there are more than one document (this should also be explained in the letter accompanying the laying copies).

Laying an HC paper

26. As House of Commons Papers are ordered to be printed by the House they can only be laid when the House is sitting. House of Commons Papers cannot be laid on days when the House is adjourned or on which Parliament is prorogued or dissolved. Please note that the House does not normally sit on Fridays except those on which private Members' bills are taken. The Journal Office can advise about the days on which the House is expected to sit. Where possible avoid laying on the last day before a recess; if there is a problem with your paper, you may not be able to lay it until after the recess and this will significantly delay publication.

27. **To lay a paper two complete copies of the paper must be delivered, by hand, to the Journal Office, which is on the third floor of the House of Commons, above the Chamber.** The Journal Office is not the same place as the Vote Office, which handles bulk copies of papers for distribution to Members and others. Documents are not accepted for laying by post, fax or e-mail. Advice on laying is available from the Journal Office and from parliamentary branches in parent departments. The physical act of laying your paper is usually undertaken by the parliamentary branch of your parent department (in the name of a Minister). Messengers will need a parliamentary pass to access the office.

- a) Each of the laying copies must be accompanied by a letter (stapled to the front of both copies of the document) that sets out clearly:
- the title of the document;
 - the Act under which it is laid;
 - the name of the Minister that will be formally recorded as laying the document (see Appendix 5);
 - the House of Commons number that has been allocated to it; and
 - that no Parliamentary proceedings apply to the paper.¹⁰

A sample laying letter is reproduced in Appendix 4.

- b) The laying copies should be the final printed version of the document. In exceptional circumstances where this is not possible, proofs can be accepted provided the text is correct, complete and will not differ in any way from the final printed version. The pagination of the document should be the same in the laid text document as in the printed publication. Pictures do not have to be included in proofs, but captions to them should be. If the price is not known it may be left off the proof but the title page must meet all the other requirements for the printed copies (see Para 24b).

28. The laying of your paper will be formally listed in the appendix to the Votes and Proceedings of the day on which it was laid. The Votes and Proceedings is the authoritative, formal record of the House's proceedings. It is published as part of the daily "Vote Bundle", which also contains the Order Paper. The Votes and Proceedings is available on the parliamentary website (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmvote/cmvote.htm>). You should check the Vote entry for your paper in the Votes and Proceedings for the day on which you have laid your paper.

¹⁰ The reason for this is that some House of Commons Papers are subject to parliamentary proceedings, for example Local Government Grant Reports and Statements of Changes in Immigration Rules. If the document is subject to parliamentary proceedings it will say so in the legislation that requires the document to be laid.

Papers laid by Return to an Address (Unopposed Returns)

29. In some cases the government may wish to lay a particularly sensitive report (usually of an inquiry) for which there is no statutory requirement or authority to lay, but for which the protection of parliamentary privilege is needed (for example, Lord Laming's Progress Report on the Protection of Children In England in March 2009). You should contact the Journal Office straight away if you are preparing a document which falls into this category. The advance agreement of the Clerk of the Journals is required and a motion has to be moved and agreed to on the Floor of the House to facilitate the laying of a Return to an Address, which is published as an HC paper in the usual way. The required motion for an unopposed return must be tabled by the relevant government department at least the day before the document is due to be laid. For further information, contact the Journal Office.

30. Please note that the process of laying a Return to an Address only applies to the House of Commons. If you are laying the same document in the House of Lords, the letter to the Printed Paper Office should note that the document is being laid as an un-numbered command paper.

Corrections to HC papers

31. If it becomes necessary to correct or revise a document published as an HC paper after the document has been laid, you must contact the Journal Office prior to the publication and distribution of a correction slip. Correction slips will be accepted for minor, typographical errors. If the correction is substantive, it may be necessary to withdraw your paper and lay it again with a new HC number. This should be avoided if possible.

Act Papers not printed as House of Commons Papers (Un-numbered Act Papers)

32. Where papers are required by statute to be laid before the House, but are not printed by order of the House, not all the requirements set out above for HC papers apply. The procedure is:

a) **To lay a paper two complete copies of the paper must be delivered, by hand, to the Journal Office, which is on the third floor of the House of Commons, above the Chamber.**

The Journal Office is not the same place as the Vote Office, which handles bulk copies of papers for distribution to Members and others. Documents are not accepted for laying by post, fax or e-mail. Advice on laying is available from the Journal Office and from parliamentary branches in parent departments. The physical act of laying your paper is usually undertaken by the parliamentary branch of your parent department (in the name of a Minister). Messengers will need a parliamentary pass to access the office

b) The document must have a title page stating the legislation under which the document is being laid, for example: "Presented to the House of Commons pursuant to section 35(5) of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993".

c) Each of the laying copies must be accompanied by a letter (stapled to the front of both copies of the document) that sets out clearly:

- the title of the document;
- the Act under which it is laid;
- The name of the Minister formally laying the document (see Appendix 5); and
- that no parliamentary proceedings apply to the paper.¹¹

A sample laying letter is reproduced in Appendix 4.

¹¹ If the document is subject to parliamentary proceedings it will say so in the legislation that requires the document to be laid.

- d) The laying copies should be the final printed version of the document. In exceptional circumstances where this is not possible, proofs can be accepted provided the text is correct, complete and will not differ in any way from the final printed version. Pictures do not have to be included in proofs, but captions to them should be. Pagination/folio references should be the same as in the final printed version. If the price is not known it may be left off the proof but the title page must meet all the other requirements for the printed copies.
 - e) The paper must be A4 size, and must be predominantly portrait in orientation. This facilitates binding into a series.
33. The laying of your paper will be formally listed in the Appendix to the Votes and Proceedings of the day on which it was laid. The Votes and Proceedings is the authoritative, formal record of the House's proceedings. It is published as part of the daily "Vote Bundle", which also contains the Order Paper. The Votes and Proceedings is available on the Parliamentary website (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmvote/cmvote.htm>). You should check the Vote entry for your paper in the Votes and Proceedings for the day on which you have laid your paper. The protection of the Parliamentary Papers Act 1840 does not apply to these papers.
34. Act papers that are not HC papers may be delivered on non-sitting days (but not in the period between the dissolution of a Parliament and the first day of meeting of the next one), although they will be treated as having been laid on the next sitting day and should not normally be published until then (if this will cause difficulties, please consult the Journal Office).

Command papers

35. If there is no statutory authority for laying a document, it cannot be laid “by Act”, but can be laid “by Command”.
36. If you are likely to want to present accounts as a Command Paper, you should consult your parent department well in advance. The rules above about the format of Act papers do not apply (although the requirements for *numbered* Command Papers are similar—see next paragraph), and you should not request or use a House of Commons number.
37. Most Command Papers appear within a numbered series administered by HMSO/OPSI (still part of the public sector and now operating as part of The National Archives), which allocates the numbers required, and also sets common standards on appearance and format, described in their booklet *How to publish a Command Paper*, or see <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/official-publications/publishing-guidance/how-to-publish-a-command-paper.pdf>. The title page of all Command papers should state that the document is “laid before Parliament by Command of Her Majesty” and be followed by the month and year in which it is to be laid. All Command papers should be published by TSO though they need not be the printers.
38. You should contact OPSI if you are planning to produce a document as a command paper. Contact details are provided at the back of this booklet.
39. Occasionally, Command Papers are un-numbered. In some cases a paper is laid “by Command” but is not printed or published (e.g. Departmental Minutes), or has a limited distribution. Nevertheless, copies must be made available to the Vote Office; guidance on un-numbered Command Papers should be sought from HMSO/OPSI.
40. If you are laying an un-numbered command paper, other than an Explanatory memorandum to a Statutory Instrument or Treaty, you **must** send an electronic copy, by e-mail, to the Vote Office (Vote_Office@parliament.uk), shortly after laying. This is

to ensure hard copies of the document can be made available to Members.

41. Command Papers are normally required to be laid before both Houses and can be laid on any weekday during the existence of a Parliament. This includes non-sitting days during adjournments and when Parliament is prorogued, but not in the period between the dissolution of a Parliament and the first day of meeting of the next one.
42. **To lay a paper two complete copies of the paper must be delivered, by hand, to the Journal Office, which is on the third floor of the House of Commons, above the Chamber.** The Journal Office is not the same place as the Vote Office, which handles bulk copies of papers for distribution to Members and others. Documents are not accepted for laying by post, fax or e-mail. Advice on laying is available from the Journal Office and from parliamentary branches in parent departments. The physical act of laying your paper is usually undertaken by the parliamentary branch of your parent department (in the name of a Minister). Messengers will need a parliamentary pass to access the office. They should be accompanied by a laying letter (stapled to the front of both copies of the document) that sets out clearly:
 - the title of the document;
 - that it is being laid by Command with the name of the laying Minister; and
 - the Command number, if applicable.

Statutory Instruments

43. Most Statutory Instruments are required to be laid before the House by Act, although some are required to be laid by Statutory Instrument (for example, many Statutory Rules of Northern Ireland). Explanatory Memoranda and Impact Assessments are laid by Command. Please ensure that the letter accompanying an instrument clearly sets out whether an instrument has attachments (Explanatory Memorandum/Impact Assessment) and what the laying authority is.
44. Most Statutory Instruments are subject to parliamentary procedure: Affirmative Procedure requires an instrument to be approved by the House before it comes into force (sometimes referred to as approval by resolution); Negative procedure provides for a period of time (usually 40 days, but occasionally 28 days) during which Members of the House can raise an objection by tabling a prayer seeking the annulment of the instrument.¹² Please ensure that you include details of which parliamentary procedure an instrument is subject to (including if it is not subject to parliamentary procedure) in the letters that accompany the document on laying.
45. Affirmative instruments (usually but not always laid in draft) are debated either in Delegated Legislation Committee (which then reports to the House) or on the Floor of the House, and the House has to agree to them before they can be made. If you are laying an affirmative instrument you will also need to write to the Principal Clerk of the Table Office to ask that a motion for the instrument's approval be added to the Order Paper.

¹² There is a further category of "super-affirmative" procedure which applies to some Legislative Reform Orders. If you are dealing with a Legislative Reform Order you may wish to consult the Journal Office.

46. Negative Instruments may be referred by the Government to a Delegated Legislation Committee or for debate on the Floor of the House, although the Government is under no obligation to refer the instrument, even if it has been prayed against. If the instrument is considered by a Delegated Legislation Committee, the Committee will report to the House that it has considered the instrument, but the House will not automatically be asked to consider it. If the House agreed by resolution to seek the annulment of the instrument, it would not automatically come out of force and in most cases a Revocation Order would be required.
47. The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments and the Merits of Statutory Instruments Committee in the House of Lords all scrutinise Statutory Instruments. Further information on the work of these Committees is available at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees.cfm>
48. The laid version of a made instrument (i.e. not a draft) must be the final version as signed. If corrections that fall within the category regarded by the Joint or Select Committee on Statutory Instruments as suitable for inclusion in the published version of the instrument are made by corrections slips or by revised printed versions (i.e. without amendment or revocation/ replacement), those slips or versions should be sent to the Journal Office and Vote Office to allow them to be taken into account if the instrument is debated. Where corrections fall outside that category they can only be made by an amending or a revoking and replacing instrument.
49. The laid version of a draft instrument is the copy that will be debated in Delegated Legislation Committee and considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. If corrections that fall within the category regarded by the Joint or Select Committee on Statutory Instruments as suitable for inclusion in the published version of the instrument are identified, a correction slip or reprint of the draft may be issued but you should consult the Journal Office and Statutory Instrument Registrar before the correction slip or reprint is produced. Such

corrections, if identified after approval by the House, can be made in the published version of the instrument, but a letter outlining the correction should be sent to the Journal Office to be filed with the original laid instrument. Where corrections are outside that category and fall to be made before debate, withdrawal and relaying (with new time limits applying) will be required.

50. Further information on the preparation and making of statutory instruments and the parliamentary procedures relating to them can be found at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/statutory-instrument-practice>, or contact siregistrar@opsi.x.gsi.gov.uk .

Laying before both Houses or before the House of Commons only

51. Before laying your paper you should check whether it needs to be laid before Parliament (i.e. both the House of Commons and the House of Lords) or only before the House of Commons. The title page of the document should be worded accordingly (i.e. 'Presented to Parliament' or 'Presented to the House of Commons').
52. Under section 7 of the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000, the Treasury may issue an accounts direction applying to the accounts. If it does so, the accounts must be prepared and transmitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General, who must certify and report on them to the Treasury. They must be then laid before the House of Commons. Accounts produced under section 7 of this Act do not need to be laid before the House of Lords.
53. Trading Funds are subject to an accounts direction provided for by s. 4(6)(a) of the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 (as amended by the Government Trading Act 1990). The same procedures for reporting by the Comptroller and Auditor General should be followed, except that the reports and accounts are laid before both Houses.

54. If your paper is laid under a different Act, the Act will specify whether the document is to be laid before Parliament or before the House of Commons. Your lawyers or those of your parent department will be able to check this for you.
55. Command papers and Statutory Instruments are normally laid before both Houses.
56. The information in this booklet relates to laying requirements for the House of Commons. However, the requirements of the House of Lords are substantially similar. Contact details for the Printed Paper Office in the House of Lords are at the back of this booklet.

Timing of release and publication of papers laid before the House

57. A paper is considered to be formally laid before the House when a copy of it is accepted by the Journal Office. At that point Members of the House are able to come to the Journal Office to view the document. Once laid, government departments should, shortly afterwards, make hard copies of the document available to the Vote Office so that copies can be made available to Members.¹³ This does not mean that the document has also to be available to the general public at that time (i.e. if you are laying advance copies for the House). If TSO are arranging publication of a document, usually provide the Vote Office with hard copies. If your document is an Un-numbered Command Paper (other than an Explanatory Memorandum to a Statutory Instrument) you should e-mail a copy to the Vote Office shortly after it has been laid (Vote_Office@parliament.uk).

¹³ Speaker's Ruling, 25 March 2009 (HCDeb Col 307)..

58. If a document is an embargoed advance copy, you may lay it but should label it with embargo stickers. The Journal Office is not responsible for monitoring or enforcing embargos. If your document is subject to a timed release (for example to coincide with a statement) and it is not desired that Members have copies in advance, you should wait until the time of release to lay the document. You may not deposit papers in the Journal Office for laying at a later time. Once delivered to the Journal Office a paper is laid and should be made available in the Vote Office shortly afterwards.
59. Any paper required by an Act of Parliament to be laid before the House should not be released (i.e. in electronic format on your website) before it has been laid. The release of an HC paper before laying is a discourtesy to the House.
60. HC papers cannot be laid when the House is not sitting. Other Act papers will be received, but are not treated as being laid until the next sitting day (and should not be published, or otherwise released, until that sitting day). You should plan the laying and publication of your document carefully so as to avoid being unable to publish because the House is in recess. If you anticipate that you will have difficulties in respect of this requirement you should contact the Journal Office as early in the process as possible.

Withdrawing a paper and Correction Slips

61. If you do need to withdraw a paper you will need to send 3 copies of a withdrawal letter to the Journal Office, one of which will be stamped and returned to you as proof of receipt. This letter must be separate from any letter laying a new version of the document. The letter should include:
- the full title of document including any paper reference number;
 - the date on which the paper was originally laid;
 - the reason for withdrawal; and
 - whether and when a revised copy is to be laid.

A sample withdrawal letter is shown in Appendix 6.

62. If you are withdrawing a document that has been laid in both Houses of Parliament you will also need to send withdrawal letters to the Printed Paper Office in the House of Lords.
63. Ideally withdrawing and relaying a paper should happen on the same day. On withdrawal of a document all original copies should be withdrawn from circulation and pulped.
64. If the document is a Statutory Instrument, you will need to consult Statutory Instrument Practice: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si-practice.doc>

Please note that a Statutory Instrument that is in force cannot usually be withdrawn. Explanatory Memoranda relating to Statutory Instruments are laid by Command and may be withdrawn (please state the details of the instrument the memorandum relates to clearly in the cover letter).

65. In some cases errors in a document can be corrected by way of a correction slip (corrigendum, erratum). Correction slips will be accepted for minor, typographical errors. If the correction is substantive, it may be necessary to withdraw your paper and lay it again. If a correction slip is issued it should be distributed to all known recipients of a document. TSO can offer advice on the publication and distribution of correction slips (contact details provided at the back of the booklet) but you should contact the Journal Office prior to the publication and distribution of a correction slip.

Contacts for further advice

Journal Office, House of Commons

- For advice on laying papers in the House of Commons, format and title page requirements contact: (020) 7219 3310/3317; fax (020) 7219 2269.
- For HC numbers contact: (020) 7219 3361/3252, fax (020) 7219 2269.

Other contacts

- *Laying papers in the House of Lords*: Clerk of the Printed Paper Office, House of Lords, (020) 7219 1246.
- *Making papers available to Members of the House of Commons*: Vote Office, (020) 7219 3631
- *Preparing reports and accounts for laying*: In the first instance, advice should be sought from the parliamentary branch of your parent department.
- *To organise the printing and publication of HC and Command papers*: TSO Command and House Papers Team (020) 7394 4272, parlypubs@tso.co.uk
- *For advice concerning the production of HC and Command papers, and obtaining Command paper numbers*: HMSO/ OPSI, tel (020) 3334 2772 or (020) 3334 2799 or email hmsopublishing@opsi.x.gsi.gov.uk
- *Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General*: the appropriate Audit Manager at the National Audit Office. The Parliamentary branch can be contacted on (020) 7798 7143 or Denise.Smith@nao.gsi.gov.uk

(TSO includes copies of relevant guidance, including links to various sources of advice, on their website at <http://www.tso.co.uk/solutions/OfficialPublishing>)

Checklist of format requirements for laid papers:

House of Commons (HC) Papers:

- A4 size
- Portrait orientation
- Perfect bound or saddle stitched (not spiral bound)
- Published by TSO
- Stand-alone title page (ideally no self cover), including:
 - Title of document
 - Legislation under which it is laid
 - “Ordered by the House of
Commons to be printed [date]”
 - HC Number
 - TSO imprint

Other papers laid by Act

- Title page bearing reference to the legislation
under which the paper is laid
- A4 size
- Portrait orientation

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL PAPERS LAID BEFORE THE HOUSE SHOULD BE AVAILABLE IN THE VOTE OFFICE SHORTLY AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN LAID, AND SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLICATION ON THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS WEBSITE.

Appendix 1: What can be laid when

	SITTING DAY	ADJOURNMENT OR RECESS	PROROGATION	DISSOLUTION
Draft SI	Yes	No	No	No House exists before which any document can be laid.
Special Procedure Order	Yes	No	No	
Made SI subject to affirmative resolution before coming into force	Yes	No	No	
Made SI (whether subject to no procedure, negative procedure or affirmative resolution within a statutory period after coming into force)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Command Paper	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Act Paper printed by order of the House	Yes	No	No	
Other Act Paper	Yes	received but treated as laid on next sitting day		
Return	Yes	No	No	

Journal Office opening hours for laying papers:

Mondays and Tuesdays: 10.00am until the rise of the House

Wednesdays and Thursdays: 9.30am until the rise of the House

Sitting Fridays: 9.30am until the rise of the House

Non-sitting days (adjournment, recess and prorogation): 11am – 3pm

Appendix 2: Sample front cover for a House of Commons paper

Disability Rights Commission

Annual Report and Accounts 2005-06

HC 253

£13.25

Appendix 3: Sample title page for a House of Commons paper

Disability Rights Commission

Annual Report and Accounts 2005-06

Annual Report presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in pursuance of paragraph 16(3) of Schedule 1 to the Disability Rights Commission Act 1999 and Accounts presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General in pursuance of paragraph 15(2) of Schedule 1 to the Disability Rights Commission Act 1999.

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 5th May 2006

HC 253

London: The Stationery Office

£13.25

Appendix 4: Sample covering letter for a House of Commons paper

Department for Work and Pensions
Parliamentary Branch
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 2AU
Tel (0207) 123 123 Fax (0207) 123 124
Email address

The Clerk in Charge
Journal Office
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

5th May 2006

Dear Sir/Madam,

Disability Rights Commission Annual Report and Accounts for 2005–06

1. The Disability Rights Commission Annual Report and Accounts are presented for laying before the House of Commons pursuant to:

Sections 15(2) and 16(3) of the Disability Rights Commission Act 1999.

2. A Printing Order is required and **HC 253** has been allocated.
3. The publication is not subject to any further Parliamentary procedures.
4. Please lay in the name of Mr Secretary Hutton.

Regards

Parliamentary Branch

Appendix 5: List of laying Ministers

The Appendix to the Votes and Proceedings records the papers laid before the House each day, and also lists the name under which they were laid (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmvote/cmvote.htm>). Current practice is such that there is an agreed list of laying ministers, and papers will only be laid in the name of those ministers. This list is agreed between the Journal Office and each department. The Journal Office will not record any document as being laid in the name of someone not appearing on that list.

LAYING MINISTERS: Style for Votes and Proceedings and Order Paper

Cabinet Office Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	The Prime Minister Liam Byrne
Justice; Privy Council	Secretary Jack Straw
Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform	Mr Pat McFadden
Department for Communities and Local Government	Secretary Hazel Blears
Department for Culture, Media and Sport	Secretary Andy Burnham
Department for Children, Schools and Families	Secretary Ed Balls
Department for Energy and Climate Change	Secretary Edward Miliband
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Secretary Hilary Benn
Departments for Innovation, Universities and Skills	Secretary John Denham
Department for International Development	Mr Secretary Alexander
Department for Transport	Secretary Geoff Hoon
Department for Work and Pensions	Secretary James Purnell
Department of Health	Secretary Alan Johnson
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	Secretary David Miliband
Home Office	Secretary Jacqui Smith
House of Commons	Ms Harriet Harman
Law Officers' Departments	The Solicitor General
Ministry of Defence	Mr Secretary Hutton
Northern Ireland Office	Mr Secretary Woodward
Scotland Office	Secretary Jim Murphy
Treasury Chief Secretary Financial Secretary Exchequer Secretary Paymaster General Economic Secretary	Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer Yvette Cooper Stephen Timms Angela Eagle Tessa Jowell Ian Pearson
Wales Office	Secretary Paul Murphy

Papers from the NAO, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, the Health Service Commissioner and sundry other sources such as the General Synod, are laid by the Clerk of the House; those from the Friendly Societies by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury.

Appendix 6: Sample letter withdrawing a paper

Department for Work and Pensions
Parliamentary Branch
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 2AU
Tel (0207) 123 123 Fax (0207) 123 124
Email address

The Clerk in Charge
Journal Office
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

12th January 2009

Dear Sir/Madam,

Disability Rights Commission Annual Report and Accounts for 2007–08

1. Due to an error in the above-mentioned paper, which was laid on 10th January 2009, it needs to be withdrawn. [If the document is a Statutory Instrument or an Explanatory Memorandum to a Statutory Instrument please give the full title of the instrument, and reference number, and the date on which it was laid.]

2. The paper does not carry an HC printing number.

3. The publication is not subject to any parliamentary procedures.

4. A corrected version of this paper will be laid today/ on DATE/ as soon as possible.

Regards Parliamentary Branch

