

Constituency regional roadshows; review and recommendations

Acting Head of Information Services

Paper by the Head of Customer Services (DIS) and the Deputy Head of Central Communications (OCE)

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This paper reviews the pilot regional constituency roadshows which ran between June 2014 and February 2015. 353 constituency based staff attended 10 pilot roadshows. Based on feedback from them and from colleagues, the roadshows were a success, and address a previously unmet need. This report recommends that roadshows become business as usual, refines their objectives, suggests KPIs and evaluation methods, and identifies improvements to maximise their effectiveness.

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Background

1. A major finding of the 2014 Members' needs survey was that the House Service did not fully understand or therefore meet the needs of Members' constituency based staff, who felt disengaged from Westminster. In response, the Acting Head of Information Services, who is also SRO to the Members' survey and chair of the General Election Planning Group (GEPG), authorised a pilot programme of regional roadshows to engage with constituency-based staff. The pilot was to gauge interest for these events, refine their aims, decide whether roadshows should become a regular service, and if so, to inform their development.
2. A total of 353 constituency based staff attended the ten pilot roadshows:
 - a. Manchester, Exeter, Perth, Belfast and Swansea (June-November 2014).
 - b. Birmingham, Gateshead, Doncaster and Norwich (December 2014-January 2015).
 - c. London (3 February 2015, replacing the planned constituency open day).
3. Based on attendance and feedback (see next section), **the roadshows have been a resounding success and have addressed a previously unmet need**. The average attendance of almost 40 staff per roadshow was despite the proximity to the dissolution of Parliament, and the short notice of putting together and advertising these events. Some events, such as Belfast and Norwich, were very small scale, and Manchester had the highest number of attendees.
4. John Owen, GEPG Project Manager (OCE), and Nitin Mehta, customer intelligence co-ordinator (DIS) led on the planning and administrative support for this extremely demanding pilot programme under the direction of the Head of Customer Services (DIS) and the Acting Head of Information Services (DIS). The roadshows have been a great success so far, thanks to the valuable contribution of these particular colleagues.

Review methods

5. At each roadshow attendees were asked to complete two evaluation forms; one on the services the House provides, and one on the roadshow event. Delegates' feedback from the first seven events (n=190 responses) is considered here. This review also sought feedback from ten colleagues involved in the running of the first five events (Manchester, Perth, Exeter, Belfast and Swansea). A questionnaire was sent to these colleagues in November 2014.
6. Colleagues were asked for their views regarding: overall programme aims/objectives; communication with colleagues, resourcing, logistics and costs; communication with delegates, programme and content. The findings and actions arising have been agreed with the Acting Head of Information Services and form the basis of this report.

Overall programme aims and objectives

7. The roadshows were conceived as a way of better engaging with a previously neglected group of service users. They were therefore seeking better two-way engagement and consultation methods, not just one-way communication. Many of their key objectives directly

support key customer service principles, such as understanding customers and their needs, fostering staff understanding of these, and team delivery as a unified service.

8. The aims and objectives of the constituency roadshows should be to (secondary benefits italicised):
- raise awareness of services and resources in Parliament available to constituency-based staff, encouraging and assisting them to make use of these and convey key messages at any given time, e.g. dissolution arrangements;
 - offer staff opportunities for a face-to-face interaction with these users, raising awareness of their needs, and also of Members' constituency lives;
 - gather feedback on services, by acting as a vehicle to conduct research and consultation to develop services that better meet the needs of constituency-based staff;
 - help constituency-based staff feel less isolated through networking not just with House staff but with other constituency staff in the region, including the opportunity for discussion focused on topical and region-specific related issues;
 - *offer popular training modules to augment L&D's regional training offering;*
 - *create a network of contacts of constituency-based staff which links to a wider intelligence base of Members and Westminster-based Members' staff;*
 - *improve networking, collaboration and developmental opportunities for staff who attend (e.g. delivering presentations, and breaking down silos);*
 - *offer a forum for relevant outside bodies to connect with constituency-based staff, subject to relevance and the control of the body overseeing the roadshows;*
 - *offer potential for better value for money by delivering roadshows at the same time as regional public outreach events, or during committee visits, so staff contribute to both.*
9. Future roadshow content and programme will be designed with these in mind.

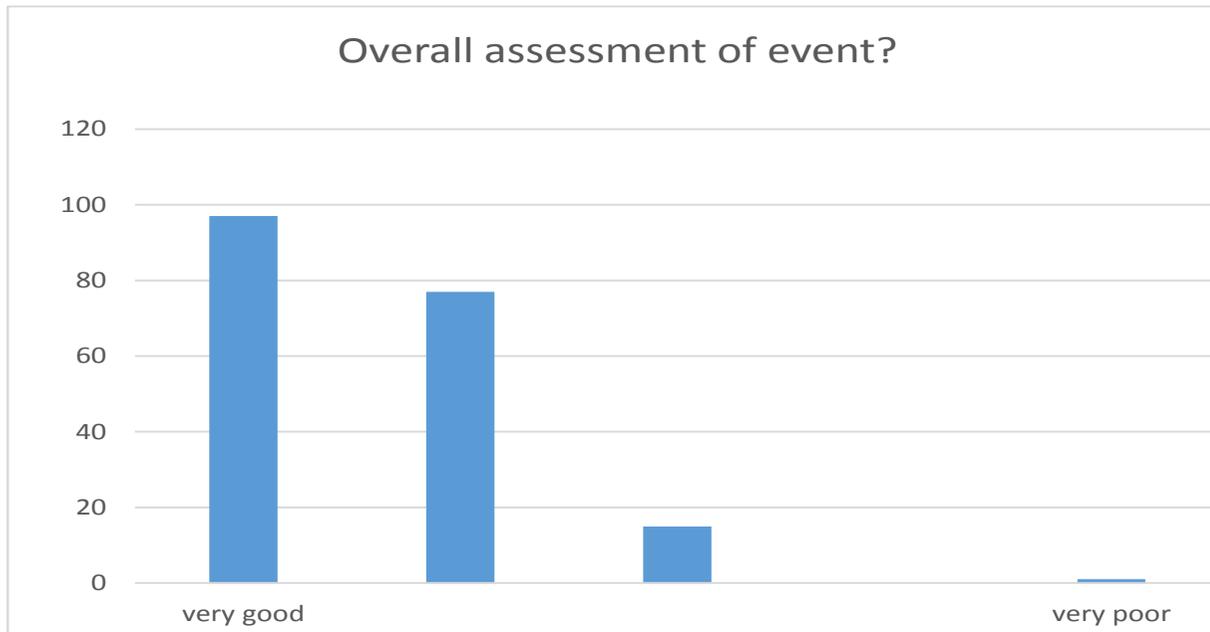
Overall feedback from delegates

10. The events were overwhelmingly popular with delegates, many of whom said on the day how pleased they were with the event, and repeated this in their written comments. These suggest not only that the roadshows met a need, but that they should be repeated in regions – here is a typical sample of the 'overall thoughts' comments:

*Thank you for coming out of London – more local roadshows please.
Regional events work well in view of attendance at todays.
These sort of events should be done on a regular basis.
Informative day, helpful.
[Please] run a regional event such as this on an annual basis (each region).*

*Thank you for doing this in the region (not London).
 Regular 6 monthly events for staff in [region] to meet and update.
 The stalls were a good idea and provide relevant information.
 I would like to hear more about how other constituency offices are set up.
 Very helpful to engage directly with the library and HoC.
 Thank you for coming out of London – more local roadshows please.
 Would be helpful to repeat this event perhaps each year.
 Similar meeting earlier in the next Parliament.*

11. The overall assessment rating from attendees was as follows:



12. Each pilot roadshow sought to improve by acting on feedback. For example, the DWP talk at the first roadshow received little positive and some negative feedback, and was not repeated. We therefore expected ratings to become more positive with time. Swansea received the

lowest rated feedback and the one ‘very poor’ rating, above. This was because of very a specific administrative failing; IPSA, the SAA and PICT did not attend. Several Swansea attendees commented similarly:

Some speakers were not present-Sergeant of [sic] Arms, PICT and IPSA

Feedback on content and format

- 13. A few colleagues felt that a longer and fuller day could be justified in order to cover more material. However, this is not supported by delegate feedback; some delegates would prefer longer, and others shorter, days. Also, some constituency staff tended to leave before the end of the programme, which suggests that the length of the day is about right.
- 14. Colleagues favoured a mixture of subjects and delivery styles, and felt that lectures should be kept to a minimum to encourage audience participation and engagement. However, delegates rated the lectures as highly as other activities:

Delegates’ feedback forms, rating of aspects of the day

	v satisfied				v unsatisfied
How satisfied were you ...	1	2	3	4	5
With the booking process and pre-event organisation?	118	53	14	1	1
With the organisation of the day?	102	72	17	2	0
With the venue and facilities?	111	60	20	1	1
With the arrangements and quality of the catering?	92	64	28	9	0
With the relevance of the topic areas?	96	77	19	1	0
With the presentations that were delivered?	99	81	13	0	0
With the ‘freshers’ fair’ type stalls?	81	75	32	2	0
With the afternoon breakout sessions?	82	61	22	3	1

- 15. Delegates are keen to receive a list of other delegates beforehand, valuing roadshows as networking events with other staff in the region, one of the new key objectives. **We will ensure that one is circulated beforehand or at the least added to a conference pack.** OCE will be responsible for developing this (see also DIS/OCE roles and responsibilities, below). As a minimum, this would include the full programme, presentations, useful material and leaflets, and a list of delegates (names and constituency) to facilitate networking.
- 16. The high attendance and level of interaction with regional staff before, during and after each event has been mainly achieved thanks to the personal efforts of Nitin Mehta, who telephoned offices to follow up on the invitations and has been developing a network of contacts at constituencies throughout the pilot roadshows. This has enabled him to develop contacts also used in the Members’ interview research. The review team would like to acknowledge his immense contribution and to thank him.

The roadshows as a vehicle for research, and for delivering training

17. The days include breakout groups, which are focus groups run by a trained member of staff, to seek feedback on House services above and beyond the informal networking that can take place. The topics covered so far, each at a series of 5-6 roadshows, have been:
 - best practices in setting up and managing constituency offices – completed, to feed into the induction programme, a guidance booklet, and next year’s roadshows to be delivered by a constituency staff member;
 - learning and development needs of these users – to inform the L&D programme after taking over the Capita training contract – completed;
 - IPSA services – completed;
 - library research publications – on-going;
 - tools for providing information to Members and their staff, for WIS (started Doncaster).
18. These have provided invaluable practical input to colleagues. However, they are all in essence stand-alone pieces of research and require much preparatory work on design and recruitment, and time analysing them post-events, and they also introduce scheduling and venue complexity on the day.
19. There were events when delegates had to wait for focus groups to finish, having nothing to do in conference rooms. The main constraint on putting more people into groups is the number of breakout rooms available, and it is also not good practice to ask people to take part in two focus groups in one day. Given it is inevitable that there will be times when some and not others are taking part in a focus group, there are two options for using this time. The main speaker should always signpost delegates to use these slots as networking opportunities and to visit the stalls. **We will also ask L&D to run short training sessions** based on the focus groups on these users’ training needs; this will be a highly cost effective way of delivering requested regional training to a large number of delegates.

Which subjects were popular?

20. The talk listed most frequently as the most useful was the General Election talk, followed by the Library talks (the subject-based briefing was not very highly valued in delegates’ feedback, although general Library introductions were). These were followed by the security talks, the breakout sessions/focus groups, and the networking opportunities. The IPSA talks received a mixed response. The least relevant subjects as rated by delegates included the presentations by Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament colleagues, DWP and the Alzheimer’s Society.
21. The inclusion of both subject-based briefing and external bodies has been experimental so far. Both were more popular with colleagues (in prospect) than with delegates (in practice). Constituency-based staff told us that they have other ways of plugging into other local services and support networks, including improved regional outreach services by the main Government agencies and departments like UKVI and DWP.

22. Based on delegates' feedback then, we will concentrate on House services at these events, while reserving the right to bring in specific agencies or Library (or DCCS) specialists when there are specific issues in a region, particularly if picked up in pre-event discussion with delegates. **The focus should remain on internal, directly relevant House/IPSA services. A regular exception might be inviting local police forces;** if the SAA is handing responsibility for constituency office security over, local police might be well placed to deliver.
23. **Post-election, the presentation on dissolution arrangements should be replaced by one on setting up an office**, ideally presented by a constituency office manager. In turn this should be replaced by another major timely issue. This, coupled with the delivery of short but popular training modules, would encourage repeat attendance by constituency staff as the roadshow comes to their region each year, even without turnover in an office.

Which staff should attend? Achieving a balance of numbers

24. Leaving aside 'guest' speakers or regional speakers such as the police, this means a smaller event should include the main delivery teams plus those which have proven consistently popular with delegates, **forming a core House roadshow minimum team of four:**
- a DIS member of staff;
 - an OCE member of staff;
 - PICT Customer Relations Team;
 - L&D, including to deliver training, facilitate networking, and advise on DHRC matters¹;
 - local police (SAA if the local police are not available to advise on office security);
 - IPSA should mirror the number of House Service staff attending (but maximum 4).
25. One of the team should also be an SCS or A grade senior member of staff (including Management Board members – Executive Committee members – if they are able to attend larger events), who is able to field questions about wider House services and explain House policy and strategy. At one event contentious issues were raised that might have benefitted from a senior member of staff at the front. This person will be the roadshow leader and 'comper' for the day, delivering the welcome, and introduction to House services talk. Their presence will also demonstrate the importance we attach to these events and to constituency staff.
26. There needs to be a bigger pool of people who can contribute, or attend or do someone else's talk in case of absences. DIS has sent a number of staff to these events, to deliver the Library services talk. Smaller departments may find it harder to provide backup or 'shadow' expertise. Election buddies, or the Members' interview project team, all of whom have received training on personal interactions, may be a good resource for this. Departments must commit to sending someone to each event where they are expected to do so; delegates were disappointed not to see IPSA at Swansea and the Sergeants at some events.

¹ Attendees ask a range of questions which have included: mental health issues, assisting disabled constituents, handling office relationships and inappropriate banter, reporting harassment, using the new helpline.

27. At the same time, it is necessary to be efficient and economical with staffing, with every person who attends having a clear and justified role, and making the best use of their time.
28. **By rotating attendance, as many members of staff as possible can enjoy the developmental opportunities the roadshows present** (e.g. meeting new stakeholders, delivering presentations, understanding the needs of our customers, connecting with staff across the House, and working away). Priority will be given to those who provide services to constituency staff. Staff seeking to attend should provide a two line 'business case' for their attendance. They will be expected to contribute throughout the day, and to do more than one of the following:
- Give a presentation;
 - Welcome delegates actively;
 - Network with delegates at the start of the day and during lunch;
 - Staff a 'stall' and interact with delegates;
 - Facilitate or take notes during a focus group;
 - Deliver training.
29. In return, DIS/OCE will offer to rehearse presentations with colleagues who need further support. This will both help meet their development needs and standardise the delivery and efficiency of our presentations. We will continue to extend invitations to colleagues from devolved institutions when in their countries, primarily for courtesy, staffing a stall and networking, rather than a presentation.
30. The final roadshow team and numbers, once collated by the OCE (see below), will be **subject to agreement of the Head of Service Delivery in DIS.**

Pre-event organisation and communication

31. There are two main areas in which more light-touch project management would be beneficial. One is on agreeing who is attending for the House sooner, while controlling numbers. The other is on co-ordinating travel, accommodation and couriers earlier, to get better prices. House staff noted that they sometimes did not know who else was attending or if a department would be represented at all until the day. This makes it harder for staff to work together to avoid repetition or omission of content.
32. One of the reasons why House attendees were confirmed late was the need for some flexibility until the numbers of delegates attending was known. For example, for Norwich (the last event, and probably too close to the election) with under 20 attendees, the DIS number attending was reduced. Already advance co-ordination has been improved, e.g. for the Doncaster and Norwich events with **an advance travel/attendee/hotel/presentations co-ordination email from OCE staff. This approach will continue.**

33. We will **publish next year's programme (June – December 2015) with dates and locations (not to venue level) by the end of March 2015** (draft programme is provided on page 11, Annex 2). Communications for each roadshow will then commence as early as possible. **A three-month communications plan** (minimum requirement) has been developed by the Central Communications Team in the OCE and will be applied to all roadshows post-election (similar to our communications approach for the constituency open days). Delegates should continue to be contacted through all available channels (email, letter, phone, intranet, staff unions and political parties).
34. **DIS will continue its successful personalised approach when contacting constituency offices** before each roadshow (follow up call with a personalised invitation to roadshows). This may have increased attendance by 30-40%.

How should responsibilities be apportioned between OCE and DIS?

35. The two offices have worked well together so far. In short, **the OCE will continue to be responsible for administration/communications/publicity and DIS for programme content.**
36. The **Central Communications Teams in the OCE will take over the administration of roadshows from the OCE's election project team, post-election.** The OCE will continue to be responsible for:
- communications on the Intranet;
 - emailing delegates to let them know an event is happening with joining instructions;
 - assembling conference packs including lists of attendees;
 - collecting and quality assuring presentations (we have a good core set of Powerpoint presentations now);
 - making IT arrangements;
 - identifying staff attendees, and notifying them of other attendees, roles and travel and hotel arrangements;
 - booking venues;
 - and recommending hotels.
37. The Customer Services Team will retain the lead on:
- follow up phonecalls with personalised invitations to delegates;
 - identifying delegate constituencies and therefore recommending regional locations;
 - identifying any region-specific policy areas to cover;
 - an overview of policy and programme/content;
 - developing the research modules to be pursued at each roadshow, liaising with House departments who want to consult constituency-based staff on their services or products and feeding back on findings to the departments concerned;
 - feeding back on delegates' feedback forms on both House services and on the events ;
 - frequent evaluation of the programme (twice annually) and performance against KPIs.

38. In essence the above has been carried out by one staff member, Nitin Mehta, so far, working with the support of the Head of Customer Services. **We will need to provide extra help, perhaps through a joint post with the OCE, to make this feasible as business as usual.**
39. Based on our experience from our pilot roadshows, we have estimated that the time commitment to help plan, manage and deliver one roadshow is about 10 working days. As we are proposing to run 12-15 roadshows annually, **an additional member of staff is necessary to help us deliver this new activity.** A full outline of what's involved in organising a roadshow is provided on page 10 (Annex 1).
40. The CST/OCE will need to work closely together to establish clear roles and responsibilities. For example, while CST will make recommendations for venues, OCE will book these. While OCE will send out the initial email invitations in the name of the Head of Customer Services, CST will follow up with personalised invitations and phonecalls.
41. The Deputy Head of Central Communications (administration/comms/publicity) and the Head of Customer Services (programming/content/engagement) will share responsibility for the roadshows, post-election.

Costs

42. DIS allocated budget for venue hire and catering costs for the pilots. So far there has been great success in booking venues, based largely on Nitin Mehta's advance preparation talking to local staff. They have recommended neutral, convenient and good value venues. We should continue to use this approach and keep note of successful venues to return to.
43. The OCE will be covering the cost of venue and catering in 2015/16, having secured a central budget for this (budget agreed to March 2016). There was confusion among some staff attendees of the pilot roadshows, who believed they could charge their subsistence expenses to OCE cost centres. This was not the case, and will remain so; **each department needs to meet from its own cost centres the costs of travel, accommodation and subsistence.**
44. Because there is no one cost centre, the roadshow reviewers have been unable to receive full costings from all areas and participants for the review. Exact figures are therefore not available. We need to be able to track this better and amalgamate costs from across departments. In future, we will track spending by asking all those making expenses claims on HAIS to add 'roadshow' into the free text notes field. An alternative would be to establish a new cost centre for this activity.
45. Based on cost figures received so far as well as reviewers' estimates for any extras and hidden costs, it is estimated that each roadshow costs approximately £40-£80 per delegate. The costs include venue hire, catering, travel, accommodation, subsistence. The number of colleagues attending and delegates affects the cost cover per delegate. For Norwich, it was estimated £125 per delegate, including staff time.

46. The above figures present good value for money and we should publish this information pro-actively alongside regular evaluation reports. For comparison, the constituency-staff open day events in Parliament cost approximately £35-£55 per delegate in catering costs.

Evaluation and proposed KPIs

47. One of the successes so far has been the collection of feedback and active adaptation of the programme in response. A six-monthly short review should be conducted and sent to staff attendees, by DIS. This will continue to inform decisions on programme/content, attendees and resourcing. If the roadshows are successful in delivering useful content, and run on an annual basis, it should be useful for delegates to attend each year, not just once per Parliament.

48. KPIs will include: 12-15 roadshows delivered annually and annual attendance of 400 delegates, and some measure of repeat attendance, and another of delegate satisfaction will be developed. Another KPI will be the cost per delegate, keeping within £100 per delegate including staff time costs, on average.

Summary of key action points

- Constituency regional roadshows should be continued, with around 12-15 per year.
- Key objectives have been defined, including networking for delegates; who should be provided with a delegate list beforehand.
- L&D will be asked to provide short training sessions and facilitate networking.
- Focus groups should continue, but we will explore only one topic at any one roadshow.
- We will explore scope for combining with other regional outreach activities.
- The focus will remain on internal, directly relevant House/IPSA services. An exception will be inviting local police for the security talk, and other organisations only if highly relevant to issues in a region.
- There should be a core minimum roadshow team of four House staff, with the team size proportional to the number of delegates expected.
- Departments should rotate attendees to maximise development opportunities.
- Post-election the key message slot will change from dissolution rules to setting up an office, and should continue to be reviewed.
- OCE (administration) and DIS (content and research) will continue to share responsibility for the roadshows (see paras 36-37).
- The personalised approach adopted by DIS will continue but needs extra support.
- An additional member of staff is necessary to help us deliver 12-15 roadshows annually.
- We will apply OCE comms planning to each roadshow, and develop an annual programme to maximise House staff notice ahead of each event.
- Departments will meet their own staff travel and subsistence costs, but we will track this better using the HAIS free text field.
- We will evaluate twice yearly, against KPIs suggested at para 48.
- We will continue to adjust content in the light of delegates' feedback.

Vasilis Gialias, Deputy Head of Central Communications
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5 February 2015

Annex 1

Roadshow time commitment

Task	Time required (minimum)	Further info
Research	11 hours	Venue: identifying potential venues (online and through contacting councils), getting and chasing quotes, getting to sign off the decision (often changing dates), booking the venue, getting info for Finance. General comms with venue to coordinate the event logistics. Accommodation and travel: researching best hotel and travel prices; making the bookings.
Comms with colleagues	3 hours	Establishing the roadshow team, booking colleagues internally. Coordinating presentations/presenters and focus groups (based on estimated attendees), plus constant changes as the situation changes. Liaising with DIS for this task.
Advertising	2 hours	Drafting content, online publishing, advertising through various comms channels. Further promoting where necessary.
Comms with delegates	21 hours	Getting together all of the Members' staff emails; getting the Members' postal addresses and emails; mail merging, printing, stamping and stuffing envelopes; drafting and sending emails. Follow up calls to attract more delegates (shared task with DIS, OCE providing support). Monitoring responses (size of the task depends on interest), replying to delegates, special requirements etc.
Final preparations	7 hours plus	Tasks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liaising with colleagues internally (finalising presentations, travel and accommodation info and coordination, materials). • liaising with delegates and venue (final email to attendees, putting together delegate lists, preparing badges, organising the courier, catering). • conference pack preparation.
Travel and attending event	14 hours	Most events require travelling the day before the event, therefore being away from the office on two consecutive days plus additional hours for travelling (this often requires 2.5 working days for distant locations).
Evaluation	10.5 plus	Evaluation forms preparation. Communications. Follow up. Data inputting. Data analysis. Report and feeding back to staff attendees for action, and tracking these. Shared task with DIS (OCE providing support).
Total	68.5 hours	Approximately 10 working days

Annex 2

Calendar of Roadshows 2015/16

(Provisional; to be confirmed after the General Election 2015)

1. 17 June 2015
Regional Constituency Event: Cambridge/Ipswich
2. 30 June 2015
Regional Constituency Event: Glasgow
3. 22 July 2015
Regional Constituency Event: London (quarterly)
4. 11 September 2015
Open Day for Westminster-based staff: London (1 of 3 events annually)
5. 7 October 2015
Regional Constituency Event: Leicester/Birmingham/Coventry
6. 20 October 2015
Regional Constituency Event: Belfast
7. 3 November 2015
Regional Constituency Event: Liverpool/North Wales
8. 17 November 2015
Regional Constituency Event: London (quarterly)
9. 1 December 2015
Regional Constituency Event: Bristol/Bath/South Wales area
10. 11 December 2015
Open Day for Westminster-based staff: London (2 of 3 events annually)
11. 13 January 2016
Regional Constituency Event: Nottingham/Lincoln

12. 26 January 2016
Regional Constituency Event: Manchester
13. 9 February 2016
Regional Constituency Event: Brighton/Portsmouth/Bournemouth
14. 23 February 2016
Regional Constituency Event: Sheffield/Leeds/Nottingham/Lincoln/York/ Hull
15. 8 March 2016
Regional Constituency Event: London (quarterly)
16. 24 March 2016
Open Day for Westminster-based staff: London (3 of 3 events annually)