Research, Impact and the UK Parliament

What is the UK Parliament?

- The House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Monarch

What does Parliament do?

- Scrutinises the UK Government
- Makes new laws and changes existing ones
- Raises and debates key issues
- Checks and approves Government spending

Where is research used in the UK Parliament?

- By Members (MPs and Peers) and their researchers
- The House of Commons and House of Lords Select Committees
- POST
- The House of Commons and House of Lords Libraries
- The House of Commons and House of Lords Committees on Bills
- All-Party Parliamentary Groups

Members (MPs and Peers) and their staff

- Members of both Houses, elected by the public in the Commons (MPs) and appointed to the House of Lords (Peers)
- Nearly all MPs and some Peers have researchers working directly for them
- MPs are primarily interested in what affects their constituents
- Peers are often eminent in a particular field

Actions: contact your local MP or find MPs and Peers potentially interested in your research area and get in touch

POST (Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology)

- An office of both Houses that bridges research and policy and supports the use of research evidence in Parliament
- Produces briefing papers on academic and other rigorous research, placing findings in a policy context and hosts events bringing in external stakeholders
- Runs fellowships for PhD and post-PhD academics

Actions: propose a POSTnote; contribute to a POST note; tell POST about you and your research

Committees on Bills

- Both Houses consider proposed legislation in detail. In the Commons, a specific Committee is often appointed to do so
- After debate on the general principles of a Bill (2nd reading) it goes to a Committee for detailed scrutiny
- In the Commons, these Committees sometimes invite the public to submit written evidence

Actions: submit written evidence, tell MPs and / or Peers about relevant research

Select Committees

- Both Houses have cross-party groups of Members, which scrutinise the work of the Government, supported by parliamentary staff
- Carry out inquiries
- Invite the public – including academics – to submit written evidence to inquiries
- Can appoint a specialist adviser – often an academic – to provide expert advice
- The Government must respond to inquiries

Actions: submit written evidence; apply to be a specialist adviser; tell relevant Select Committees about you and your research; suggest topics for future inquiries

Libraries

- Both Houses have a Library that provides impartial information for Members and their staff
- Produce briefing papers on all areas of policy and legislation
- Offer a confidential, one-to-one enquiry service for Members

Actions: familiarise yourself with the work of the Libraries, identify the relevant expert and send them relevant research

All-party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)

- Informal cross-party groups of MPs and Peers. (They have no official status in Parliament)
- Meet to discuss, campaign on and promote particular issues
- Host events and sometimes produce reports

Actions: find relevant APPGs and let them know about you and your research

TOP TIPS FOR BRIEFING PARLIAMENT ON YOUR RESEARCH

- Members and staff are busy and often not expert in the areas they are dealing with; be clear and concise
- Start with an overview that outlines the key points and explain why the issue is relevant to Parliament, and why now
- Think about the presentation and format of your briefing and use visual aids where appropriate
- Your research alone isn't enough; be clear about how you are building on existing knowledge and focus on the impacts on people and how it could have an effect on policy and the law
- Present the evidence for your argument and be explicit about limitations and caveats. Avoid emotive language
- Include your sources of information, contact details and the date

UK Parliament