

# Policy impact training

## How to engage with the UK Parliament

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Research Associate  
20/11/2024



# WELCOME

Heseltine Institute  
for Public Policy,  
Practice and Place

In this session we will discuss how you can engage with the UK Parliament.

Together we will explore:

- How the UK Parliament works and uses research
- The different ways that researchers can work with the UK Parliament
- Practical next steps for influencing policy through Parliament

This session refreshes, and builds on, our previous session with the UK Parliament's Knowledge Exchange Unit.

You can access more information here:

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/heseltine-institute/policyimpacttraining/policyimpacttraininghowtoinfluenceparliament/>



# AGENDA

13.00 Welcome

13.10 Engaging with the UK Parliament – routes, practical steps and top tips

13.40 Experiences of working with UK Parliament - short presentations from our panel of peers

14.30 Q&A

14.50 Evaluation

15.00 Session close

# OUTLINE

This session will cover:

- **What is the UK Parliament?**
- **Why should we engage with Parliament?**
- **What are the different pathways to engagement with Parliament?**
- **What are some practical tips for engaging effectively with Parliament?**
- **What are some next steps for your engagement activity?**

# WHAT IS THE UK PARLIAMENT?

Parliament is the supreme legislative body of the United Kingdom, and is comprised of:

- **The House of Commons** – the lower chamber, made up of some 650 elected Members of Parliament (MPs).
- **The House of Lords** – the upper chamber, made up of 805 appointed or hereditary peers.
- **The Monarch** – a largely ceremonial role, held by the King or Queen of the day, to approve parliamentary bills and bring them into law.



# WHAT IS THE UK PARLIAMENT?

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Parliament **IS NOT** the same as government.

## Governments...

- Are led by the party/ies that command a majority in the House of Commons.
- Are comprised of the MPs and Peers selected by the Prime Minister to lead government departments.
- Draft and implement legislation.
- Makes decisions about the day to day running of the country.



# WHAT IS THE UK PARLIAMENT?

Parliament **IS NOT** the same as government.

## Parliament...

- Checks and challenges the work of Government (scrutiny)
- Drafts, amends, and passes laws (legislation)
- Debates important issues of the day (debating)
- Checks and approves Government spending (taxes and budgets)



# WHY ENGAGE WITH PARLIAMENT?

- **A new parliament:** help inform the new legislative cycle, and emerging policy agendas.
- **Highly valued:** researchers have evidence and expertise that can support parliamentary work.
- **Impact and influence:** researchers can contribute to scrutiny of policy, and inform legislation.
- **Increased reach:** engagement can help raise the profile of your research, and broaden dissemination.
- **Career development:** engagement can help open up new perspectives, raise new questions, and build new skills.



# PATHWAYS TO ENGAGEMENT

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Research is used across Parliament in a variety of ways, and there are several routes for academics to engage.

Today we will discuss:

- Select Committees
- The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)
- Parliamentary Libraries
- All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)
- Engaging with Members
- Parliamentary Fellowships



# SELECT COMMITTEES

**Select Committees** are cross-party bodies in both the House of Commons and House of Lords.

- They scrutinise Government conduct across a wide range of subject areas.
- They regularly run inquiries and invite evidence to inform reports.
- An established route for researchers to engage with parliament.
- Governments often respond to and act on inquiry findings.
- Further opportunities for researchers to propose inquiries, host committee visits, provide private briefings, or contribute as a special advisor.



# SELECT COMMITTEES

## QUICK ACTIVITY (3 mins)

Visit <https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/committees/select/> (link in the chat)

Use the A-Z listings to identify one **Commons** Select Committee and one **Lords** Select Committee on a topic that may be relevant to your research.

Then, visit <https://committees.parliament.uk/inquiries/> (link in the chat)

Use the search function to explore the current Select Committee inquiries that are accepting written evidence. Explore a call for evidence and see what is typically required.

For more information on submitting evidence to Select Committees visit <https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/committees/give-evidence-to-a-select-committee/>

# POST

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**The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)** is Parliament's science advice mechanism, which aims to provide Members with reliable, impartial research.

- Focus on horizon-scanning and cutting edge/topical issues.
- Activity organised around four themes:  
Biological sciences and health,  
Physical sciences and ICT,  
Energy and environment,  
Social sciences.
- Many ways to contribute, including **POSTnote** and **POSTbrief** series.

Visit <https://post.parliament.uk/contributing-to-post-research-as-an-expert/> for more information.



# PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIES

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Both the **House of Commons Library** and **House of Lords Library** provide impartial information and briefing services to Members.

The libraries are **responsive** to Member needs and **reactive** to topics that are currently the focus of parliamentary business.

Academics are encouraged to work with the libraries by contributing to:

- research briefings,
- constituency case work,
- data dashboards,
- and debate packs.

Contact library subject specialists to discuss contributions.



# APPGS

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) provide an informal structure within parliament for members to collaborate on special interests or particular topics.

They have less power than select committees, and activity levels can vary.

However, they can provide researchers with opportunities to:

- present at meetings,
- collaborate on reports,
- provide briefings,
- respond to a call for evidence,
- propose inquiries.



# APPGS

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## QUICK ACTIVITY (2 mins)

Google “APPG Register”

Select most recent.

Are there any groups that align with your research interests?

Note details about the purpose, officers, secretariat.

Are there any recent publications you can review or any upcoming events you could attend?



appg

# ENGAGING WITH MEMBERS

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Researchers can also engage directly with individual Members and their staff to inform their constituency work, their contributions to parliamentary debates and questions to Government, private member's bills, and scrutiny of draft legislation.

Hansard is a useful way to identify Parliamentarians that may be interested in your areas of expertise.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/>

The list of Early Day Motions can also indicate which topics are of interest to which MPs. Visit <https://edm.parliament.uk/>





# PARLIAMENTARY FELLOWSHIPS

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Parliamentary fellowships offer academics, across all career stages, the opportunity to work formally with Parliament.

Currently these include:

- **POST PhD Fellowships** – in which sponsored PhD students can work at POST, usually for three months, to contribute to briefings.
- **Parliamentary Academic Fellowship Scheme** – in which researchers use their knowledge and skills to carry out projects in UK Parliament. Applications are open to all UK-based university researchers who already have a PhD and are employed on an academic contract, as well as university staff working in impact or knowledge exchange.
- **Parliamentary Thematic Research Leads** – in which mid-career researchers are embedded part-time in Parliament to share their academic expertise and experience.

# TOP TIPS...

**Make your work interesting:** Provide a hook, and demonstrate why your research is timely. Include worked examples, visual content, and practical recommendations.

**Make your work user-friendly:** keep it short, always provide contact details, and be mindful of using partisan language or academic jargon.

**Meet politicians where they are:** understand their challenges, their motivations, and their perspectives on your research.

**Do your research:** follow parliamentary business, read briefings and reports, and attend events to better understand the context.

**Subscribe** to UK Parliament's Knowledge Exchange Unit weekly round-up to learn about the latest opportunities for researchers <http://www.parliament.uk/keunews> (link in chat).

# NEXT STEPS...

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**Provide** written evidence to a Select Committee inquiry.

**Contact** an APPG.

**Introduce** yourself to the Parliamentary Libraries.

**Participate** in a POSTnote.

**Approach** a Member.

**Apply** for a Parliamentary Fellowship.

**Brush up** on the latest news.

**Watch** for opportunities.



# CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

Taken from Knowledge Exchange Unit weekly round-up

- **Multiple select committees currently accepting written evidence, including:**
  - Make Work Pay: Employment Rights Bill | Business and Trade Committee | 6 December 2024
  - Summer 2024 disorder | Home Affairs Committee | 10 December 2024
  - Adult Social Care Reform: The Cost of Inaction | Health and Social Care Committee | 11 December 2024
  - Unlocking community energy at scale | Energy, Security and Net Zero Committee | 13 January 2025
- **The Modernisation Committee inquiring how the House of Commons can be more effective.**  
The Committee is inviting submissions of no more than 2500 words by 3pm, 16 December 2024.
- **The International Development Committee is calling for ideas to shape a future inquiry.**  
The Committee is inviting submissions of up to 500 words, outlining potential inquiry ideas, by Monday 9 December.
- **The House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee is recruiting a committee specialist to provide policy advice and analysis.**  
This is a permanent role. The deadline for applications is 1 December 2024.

# Engaging with Parliaments

**Dr Danielle Beswick, University of  
Birmingham**

Heseltine Institute, University of Liverpool  
20 November 2024



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# How have I engaged with Parliament?

- Parliamentary academic fellowship: 2-year part-time secondment to investigate, support and improve witness diversity (2018-20).
- ESRC IAA-funded KE project with Dr Marc Geddes (Edinburgh) across Scottish, Welsh, Northern Ireland and UK Parliaments, sharing best practice on academic engagement and impact (2019-20).
- UK Select Committee Engagement Committee Team commissioned research on barriers to public engagement (2019-21).
- Contributor to UK Parliament 'Effective Scrutiny' training (2022-4).
- Expert witness for Scottish Parliament inquiry (citizen panel) on barriers to engagement (2022)
- Special Advisor for upcoming select committee inquiry (2024-5)
- Serial submitter of written evidence and informal advisor for parliamentary fellows, thematic leads, parliament staff and academics



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# What have I learned?

- Parliament is time poor and will often resort to ‘usual suspects’
- BUT, there is space, and officials want to hear new voices
- Academic research is highly-valued
- Academics do not always present and deliver it well - packaged to fit parliament’s needs, interests and capabilities.

From my interviews with parliament officials and members:

*Academic research is like the gold standard, we know it’s ethical and robust.*

*Academics aren’t going to be pushing an agenda, like think tanks and companies, we know they aren’t completely neutral but they are more neutral.*

*Academic research can be good for putting UK policies in context – how do other places tackle these policy issues, and what can we learn from that?*

*But...sending us a copy of your book or an article isn’t likely to cut through!*



# What works?

- Prioritise what they need to know, not everything you want to say
- Be clear about why it matters – what do you want them to do/change?
- Find your audience and ways in – local MP? Committee? APPG? Relevant Bills? Evidence from other countries? Media/public attention?
- Raise your profile – social media, online short videos, blogs...
- Identify resources and support - talk to people who have done this before
- Be brave – speculative contact is fine!







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**SUE JARVIS**

Co-director, Heseltine Institute for  
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# CONSULTATION AND INQUIRY RESPONSES

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Over recent years the Heseltine Institute has submitted evidence to a number of parliamentary inquiries and consultations, including:

- 2024** Work and Pensions Committee - Inquiry into the Devolution of Employment Support.
- 2022** Devolution APPG - Levelling Up the UK inquiry.
- 2021** Constitution Committee - Inquiry into Future Governance of the UK.  
The Productivity Commission - Sizing the productivity problem: international, national, regional and sectoral aspects.  
Devolution APPG - Inquiry on the Role of Central Government in English Devolution.
- 2020** Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee - English Devolution.  
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Committee - Inquiry into Post-Pandemic Economic Growth.  
Freeports Consultation - Boosting Trade, Jobs and Investment Across the UK.

# LIVERPOOL CITY REGION ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

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Since 2021, the Heseltine Institute has been the official academic partner of the Liverpool City Region APPG, helping to provide evidence and inform both parliamentary events and published reports.



# PROFESSOR HELEN STALFORD

Professor of Law, University of Liverpool





HOUSE OF LORDS

European Union Committee

2nd Report of Session 2016–17

# Children in crisis: unaccompanied migrant children in the EU

Ordered to be printed 19 July 2016 and published 26 July 2016

Published by the Authority of the House of Lords

HL Paper 34



## Making Brexit work for children

The impact of Brexit on children and young people

November 2017



# LOHST

Lives on Hold, Our Stories Told



ESRC-funded (Jan 2021-July 2023)



HOUSE OF LORDS

European Union Committee

2nd Report of Session 2016–17

**Children in crisis:  
unaccompanied  
migrant children in  
the EU**

Ordered to be printed 19 July 2016 and published 26 July 2016

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HL Paper 34

# Engaging with Parliamentary Inquiries: what I learned as a special advisor

- Becoming a special advisor
- Knowing the clerk and special advisor
- Responding to calls for evidence
- Attending evidence sessions



# Making Brexit work for children

The impact of Brexit on children and young people

November 2017



# Engaging with Peers

- Building relationships over time
- Being available at short notice to draft speeches
- Tailoring your research evidence to focused points of relevance
- Calibrating expectations

# EU Settled Status Scheme: Awareness, Access and Eligibility

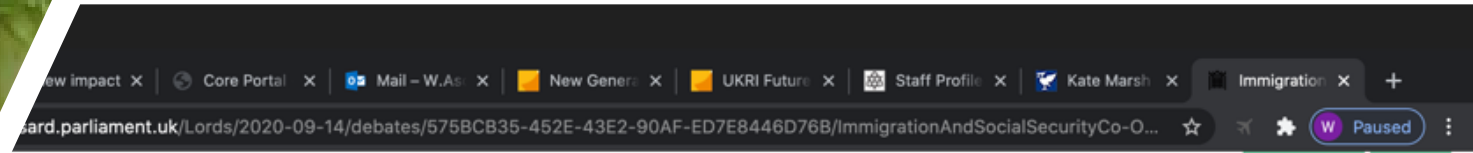
*EEA Children and British Citizenship  
Why it is Important to Focus  
on Roma Children*



Photo by Caroline Hernandez on Unsplash



Research Briefing



## Lord Lister of Burtsett (Lab)

Share

...s, I must admit that I originally found the Government's arguments quite persuasive in the briefing the Minister had prepared for us, but I have changed my mind, having heard from the 3 million representatives about the many potential pitfalls and just how anxious many of those affected are at the prospect of not having physical proof. I have also seen evidence from the Roma community, the European Children's Rights Unit and the Roma Support Group, the latter arguing that this group experiences a combination of digital exclusion and a lack of digital skills. That is true of many marginalised groups. The noble Lord, Lord Alton, has spoken very movingly about this group already.

Column 1088  
Click to show

The noble Lord, Lord Oates, referred to a promised policy equality statement that still has not appeared. This is really important, because we know that digital-only policies are likely to have a differential impact on groups with protected characteristics, as the example of the Roma community indicates. We know from universal credit the problems that





# LIVES ON HOLD, OUR STORIES TOLD (LOHST): RESEARCH BRIEFING NO.1

The Impact of Covid-19 on Asylum Age Assessments in England

We used our evidence on age assessment to challenge proposals to change the law on age assessment under s.4 of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022:

Cited in: [Parliamentary POST report, March 2022](#)

## The Use of Biological Methods in Asylum Age Assessments



The Nationality and Borders Bill (2021-22) sets out reforms to immigration and asylum policy. It would allow new approaches to the process of assessing the age of asylum seekers. This briefing is an overview of current age assessment processes used in the UK and internationally. It outlines some biological methods that could be considered to inform age assessments under the new legislation and provides an overview of the evidence on their validity and limitations. It also considers the wider ethical issues arising from their use.

### Background

Age assessments are used in the asylum system to determine whether an asylum seeker is under 18 years old. They are needed where an individual's age is unknown or disputed, and where there is little or no supporting evidence.<sup>1</sup> People seeking sanctuary in the UK and granted asylum<sup>2</sup> have the right to receive protection and assistance.<sup>3</sup> A person's age is important in determining how an asylum claim is processed and the state support received, notably educational, health and welfare services to meet a child's needs (Box 1).<sup>4</sup> The UK Government has expressed a concern that the current approach to determine the age of asylum seekers is "highly subjective".<sup>5</sup> It states that it can lead to costly and protracted legal disputes when Home Office decisions are challenged, alongside safeguarding issues when a child is determined to be an adult and vice versa. The Nationality and Borders Bill, which proposes wider immigration policy reform, will allow the introduction of

### Overview

- Age assessments are carried out when an individual's age is unknown or disputed. One of their uses is to distinguish children from adults in the asylum system.
- In the absence of documentary evidence, current policy determines an individual's age by an initial visual assessment of physical appearance. Where doubt remains, age is assessed by examining social and biographical data.
- New legislation allowing for unspecified "scientific methods" in age assessments is intended to minimise subjectivity.
- Biological methods to estimate age are used in asylum policy and processing in other countries. Common techniques involve examining the skeleton and teeth, but these are imprecise, with wide margins of error.
- Many stakeholders state that these methods should not be relied upon or replace holistic assessments that draw on a wide range of relevant data.

"scientific methods" to the age assessment process; their scope and validity is discussed here.<sup>6</sup> In the Bill, the term scientific methods is used to describe approaches examining physical characteristics, referred to here as biological methods.

### Recent trends in asylum applications

The Home Office reports asylum statistics.<sup>7</sup> Table 1 outlines recent trends. In 2021, 44,778 asylum claims were made, of which 8% (3,762) were from unaccompanied children (94% of which were males). The most common nationalities of unaccompanied children applying for asylum since 2017 are Iranian, Eritrean, Sudanese, Afghan and Iraqi.<sup>8</sup>

*Age disputes in asylum applications*  
Age disputes occur where there is doubt about a person's claimed age and there is little or no supporting evidence. There were 700-900 age disputes every year between 2017-2020; this increased to 2,517 in 2021.<sup>9</sup> This is the highest figure recorded

## Young Albanian men 'viciously exploited' after arriving in UK

Charity says asylum seekers from Albania travel to the UK primarily because of poverty and corruption



Shpresa, is a charity that supports young trafficked Albanians in London. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

We used our evidence on the experiences of young Albanians seeking asylum to challenge the removal of Albania from the list of safe states under the Illegal Migration Bill in June 2023. The evidence was cited by Baroness Lister [in a House of Lords debate on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023](#)



Baroness Lister (Labour) speaking during Lords Committee Stage



# Q&A

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# EVALUATION





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