Providing scientific advice to Parliaments – Lessons learned from the UK

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Parliament

Legislation – Scrutiny - Debate
Many different actors

- Backbencher
- Shadow cabinet
- Committee chair
- MPs researchers
- Clerks
- Speaker

- Contribute to debate
- Respond to a constituent
- Ask a parliamentary question
- Vote on a bill
- Decide what to run an inquiry on
## Scientific advice to Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House of Commons Committees</th>
<th>House of Lords Committees</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>House of Commons Library</em></td>
<td><em>House of Lords Library</em></td>
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<td><strong>Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)</strong></td>
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<td><em>All Party Parliamentary Groups</em></td>
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<td><em>(e.g., Parliamentary and Scientific Committee)</em></td>
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**External stakeholders**

(learned societies, thinktanks, academics, industry, campaign groups… )
What POST Does

Bicameral institution of Parliament governed by parliamentary board and funded by parliament:

• Pro-active focus
• External facing
• Specific focus on research evidence
Objective analysis—‘POSTnotes’

- Take + 3 months to produce
- Involve input from 20+ external stakeholders, including academics
- Undergo several stages of review both within and outside parliament
- Aim to *inform* parliamentary debate but not to *influence it* in any particular policy direction
support to committees/libraries

• Contacts and background literature
• Briefings
• Suggestions for inquiry topics
• Suggested questions for witnesses
• Assistance with reviewing evidence
principles

- Impartiality
- Objectivity
- Independence
- Transparency
The overarching aim of the Social Science Section is to provide parliamentarians with more access to social science research evidence and to support the use of research evidence across Parliament.
Demand vs supply

• Understanding of what research evidence is, and how it is obtained, is crucial

• Appreciation of quality/critical appraisal
  – Capacity building of staff
  – Members professional development

• What the public think drives what parliament cares about
Thank you!

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