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- The idea for a question may originate with the Member, their staff or an agent external to Parliament.
- 2
- The Member may ask their staff or the library to do further research.
- 3
- The question may be submitted by the Member or by a member of their staff. It may be submitted via PeerHub, email or in person on paper.
- 4
- A Member may table no more than six written questions per day and no more than 12 in a week. A spreadsheet of questions per Member is checked and updated.
- 5
- The Table Office may spot that the question is a duplicate of a recently tabled question. This is not well enforced.
- 6
- The Table Office will check that the question is admissible. Questions are inadmissible if, for example: they are on a subject for which the Government is not responsible; they seek a legal opinion; they ask for agreement from the Government. The full rules for admissibility are set out in the Companion to Standing Orders. A question being declared inadmissible is referred to as 'carded' in the House of Commons.
- 7
- If the Table Office declare the question is inadmissible, the Member may reformulate the question over correspondence with the Table Office.
- 8
- The Table Office may reword a question to match House style. Changes may include adding 'To ask Her Majesty's Government', list styling, stripping adjectives and rewording in neutral terms.
- 9
- The Table Office will enter admissible questions into LBIS assigned to what they believe to be the appropriate department. The department may or may not have been indicated by the Member.
- 10
- From 5pm on a tabling day, the Table Office export submitted questions to Word. The Table Clerk and the Clerk Assistant edit using track changes. Spell checking also takes place because the textarea in LBIS does not support spell check. Government Whips also have non-edit access and may petition that the question is on a subject that the Government is not responsible for. Very occasionally, a question may be declared inadmissible at this point.
- 11
- The Table Office will enter any changes made in Word back into LBIS.
- 12
- When the House rises on a sitting day, questions having made it this far are tabled. It is believed the question UID is generated at this point. The question is sent to Q&A - possibly via data.parliament. An email is sent to the tabling Member. The clock timing how long the department has to answer starts. The department is expected to answer within 14 days.
- 13
- It is believed there is a 30 minute delay following the email to the Member, at which point the question is published to parliament.uk and made available to Search & Indexing. XML is exported from LBIS - though this could be from Q&A or data.parliament. The XML lacks markup for information which is structured in LBIS such the question number. A person right aligns all the numbers in In Design and outputs a PDF as part of Lords' Business Papers.
- 14
- The Departmental Parliamentary Team check if the question should be allocated to a different department. If it should, they email the Table Office, who transfer the question in LBIS, from where it is transferred in Q&A and picked up by the Departmental Parliamentary Team in that department.
- 15
- Should prorogation and / or dissolution happen within the 14 days allocated for answer, the Departmental Parliamentary Team will send a boilerplate answer explaining that there was not time to provide a full answer.
- 16
- In order to answer the question, the Departmental Parliamentary Team may need to speak to Special Advisors, policy experts or delivery managers. They may also need to communicate with subject matter experts in arms length bodies. Once the information is gathered, the Departmental Parliamentary Team compose and answer. At this point, the answer may go to the Minister's Red Box. But this bit is unclear,